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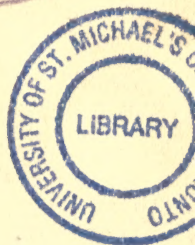
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THE CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE

SET FORTH IN SERMONS

BY THE

RT. REV. JOHN CUTHBERT HEDLEY, O.S.B.
BISHOP OF NEWPORT

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I.

REVELATION.

"When the Paraclete shall come, Whom I shall send from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, He shall give testimony of Me."—*John* xv. 26.

THE Lord Jesus went up to the heavens when the time was come, and the earth saw Him no more. But we cannot read that last discourse of His before His Passion without feeling how anxious He was for His children to understand that He was not in reality leaving them—not really abandoning them. He was to send the "other" Paraclete in His place. *He* had been a Paraclete—Master and Teacher, Leader and Lord, Father and Comforter—as long as He was upon the earth. His Spirit—Who is substantially Himself—was to be still to His beloved ones all that these words imply. It was even "expedient"—that is, better—for them that He should go. The presence of the Spirit was to be a spiritual presence, it is true, and to be discerned principally by the eye of Faith alone. Yet it was to take hold of this visible universe—to have a voice, to use hands, to glorify matter, and to impress itself on the very senses and imagination of men. So that, if Jesus no longer walked by the shores of the Lake, or preached in the porch of the

Temple, yet still His own true and very word was to be with us, and His own Hand was to lift the fallen and to bless the suppliants by the way.

What that Spirit worketh in this world of ours is a theme that is never exhausted. This it is that the Saints have written about, and the preachers continually preach. To-day a part only of that œcumenical ministration will occupy our thoughts. Let us this morning, as we gaze up to those heavens whither our Lord and Saviour has gone up, sorrowing and rejoicing, rejoicing and sorrowing, as the disciples did upon Mount Olivet, fix our thought on the deep and moving truth, that although He is out of sight, sitting at the right hand of His Father in that Father's kingdom, yet we have, during all our pilgrimage, the sweetness and the guidance of His voice. If Revelation be a fact, is it not a greater fact than any law of nature or any event of history? If the Lord speaks, and if man can hear, then let other sounds be silent, and other voices be unregarded. For the Lord is the Creator, our Father, and our only End, for all the eternal years of our mysterious destiny.

Man, left to himself, has never doubted that he could hear the voice of God. The universal race of human beings, taking all the earth and all the centuries, has always listened for God. It is only philosophers who have refined and denied. The universal idea of a superior Power, of a new Order, of an Avenger, living in regions out of sight but nigh at hand for all that, has been supplemented by the conviction, quite as widely spread, that this hidden

Influence could communicate with men, and make known its wishes and decrees. The East and the West, Greece and Scandinavia, India and the darkest tracts of Africa, have always had their oracles. What is this but the widespread trace of that primitive happy time when God walked with Adam in Paradise, and spoke to him as a man speaks to a friend?

Neither is there any reason why man, as poor a creature as he may be, should not be able to hear God and understand Him. For it is a most striking and even awe-inspiring fact, that the human intelligence, being a spirit, can receive or take in the same ideas as any other spirit. God and man are in this alike—they are spirits—and one spirit can understand another. With humble adoration we say it: God is a Spirit, and you and I are made to the likeness of God. There is nothing higher than spirit, and all spiritual conceptions are so far on the same footing. It is true that God is the Infinite; and that it follows, from His being Infinite and Absolute, that to call Him a Spirit does not and cannot represent to our minds all that that Infinite Spirit is; that His “conceptions” or “ideas” or “words” are represented by these terms with an inadequacy which is simply infinite. But because our words are inadequate they are not therefore untrue, provided we recognise them to be inadequate. Hence Almighty God and His Divine conceptions and ineffable words can be and are received into our limited intelligence. They are of God’s light, and the created participation of God’s light makes the light of our own spirits; and therefore

whatever may proceed from God can impress *our* faculty ; or, in other words, can be taken in, though not completely, and understood, though most inadequately. Whatever God thinks—we are obliged to use human phrases—may be thought by the spirit of man. He makes himself known to us only as far as He may please. But we have so much likeness to Him that our intelligences respond, like strings to the breathings of the wind, when His communications come. It may be little that we shall ever know of Him in comparison with what He is. The glory of His being radiates for ever and ever a thousand thousand times more powerfully than any sun of any system of this universe ; and this little point, the spiritual soul of man, catches only a few of those Divine rays. But when they touch they do not glance coldly off like the sun from an iceberg of the polar sea ; but the human spirit drinks them in, and they find a temple and a home ; and that which came from God illuminates the spiritual being of man.

You need not to be reminded that it is not every kind of Divine communication that is Revelation. It is useful, and it consoles us and lifts us up, to remember how near God has made us to Himself. But when we are speaking of that which is in the heart of man, we must distinctly make it clear to ourselves how much is strictly Revelation. What we know may come from God in the ordinary process of nature, or by some miraculous indication. Now, a miracle is an interruption of the order of external nature. So that Revelation is a message from God made to man

by an interruption of the order of nature. Thus God spoke to Moses, and to the Prophets, and by His only begotten Son. What we are here speaking of, then, is that communication of Divine conceptions which man receives from outside, and in such a way that he can be sure it is the Creator Who makes it.

Remembering this, let us observe that the necessity for Revelation rests on the necessity there is on man's side for religious certainty. It is a fashion in our days to say that nothing is certain. Philosophers, so called, write books to prove we cannot be sure that outside things exist, or that two and two do not make five. To me it is enough to say that the universal human mind steadily asserts these things. The universal human intelligence, left to itself, rushes like a river in one direction; therefore, that direction is Nature; and Nature is Fact and Truth. Here and there, it is true, some child upon the brink of such a river, playing with the deep waters, diverts them laboriously into a channel that will be obliterated in a day. But one man's perverted ingenuity makes no difference to that which is nature. Certainty exists, and things are certain. Yet, when we come to spiritual truths, there is not a little difficulty. The mind can not only take in, but it can create. Acting upon its impressions, it can make a whole universe. Conceptions, views, fancies, let us call them, spring up within it, like the green things which clothe the earth as the sun and the showers rouse its life in the advancing days of spring. It takes its feelings for truth and its longings for realities. It gives life to

the inanimate, and hears voices in the storm and in the roar of the waters. It gives personality to the laws and the forces of nature, and sees agencies, friendly and hostile, behind the cloud and beneath the surface of the earth. On the other hand, its own primary conceptions, which it cannot altogether obscure, much less obliterate,—even these it can make dim and confused. God, conscience, responsibility, the sense of right and wrong,—these are rooted in the human mind, and to pluck them up would be to destroy the mind. But conceptions are like lights at sea; they may be there in the lighthouse and they may be alive, but if the fogs come on the mariner sees them not. And the mind breeds its fogs like the sea. Hence comes that which is so familiar to every one who follows the history of man—that discord and that divergence among minds which are kindled all of them by the same divinely-spiced ray of light. What is God? What is life? Have I a spiritual soul? Is there immortality? On these things there is in every man the ground and possibility of certainty. But if he is to be certain, certain before it is too late, certain without a labour he will never undergo, certain and yet able to live his daily life—for this there must be a voice from the outside, clear, precise, and unmistakable. There must be a sign from Heaven. Even as regards those spiritual truths as to which a man may have assurance without Revelation, yet Revelation is needed for that steady and practical certainty without which the brightest transient flashes of insight are useless for the purposes of human life.

"I have seen all things," exclaimed the Wise Man. ". . . I have given my heart to know . . . and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (*Eccles.* i. 14, 17)—that is, when man thinks he can rest in religious certainty without God's voice.

But if Revelation is so necessary for men, the question next arises, whether God must necessarily give it to us. And the answer is, that God was to be expected to give it us. We are made in a certain fashion, and the gift of Revelation does not enter into our natural inheritance; it is no part of our Maker's primary creation, and we cannot demand it of Him in virtue of what we are. But, looking at our actualities, our faculties, and our possibilities, it was to be expected. God could not have left us without Revelation, just as He could not have left us without Grace. Absolutely speaking, no doubt, He could; there is no eternal law of His being compelling Him to lift us to the supernatural order. But, knowing to some extent what He is, and knowing what we ourselves are, we could have foretold that He would "give gifts to men" (*Eph.* iv. 8). A spiritual nature cannot stop within its nature. It seems a paradox to say this. The view which we hear constantly enlarged upon by all but Catholic preachers is that human nature is complete, and has possibilities of perfection within itself. What could be more futile, these reasoners exclaim, than that God should have made a nature with gifts so complex and so wonderful, and yet should find Himself obliged, the instant it had left His hands, to supplement its deficiencies with the lavish infusion of

gifts of another sphere—the lavish exertion of powers altogether His own? The answer is, that if the nature was to be spiritual, nothing else could be expected to happen. The reason is, that what is spiritual is incapable of definite limitation. No man had ever a thought to which he could not add another and a deeper thought. No mind ever formed an ideal to which there could not be given some yet higher characteristic or more glorious feature. No instant can happen in the existence of a thinking being when there could be no new thoughts, no new combinations, no new aspirations. Therefore, if the spiritual heart of man was to have religion, not only must that religion be definitely given to it by a message from the outside, but, what is more, that message from above must reveal the very highest possible conception of a Creator and a Last End—the most perfect ideal of a God and a Father; or else the heart would querulously and restlessly still seek for something more. A reason of the same kind makes the personal infusion of Divine Grace a necessity, in the sense explained. For infused Grace is made necessary by the beatific Vision which is our inheritance as children of adoption. Now, our adoption itself and that blissful Vision of God's face are so far necessary to man that a future life without the Vision, in order to be a satisfied life, would have to be a continual and violent and multiplied miracle. For a future life without the Vision would be only the possessing of the finite; but if it had only the finite, the speculation and reaching out of man's spirit would go

on as in this world below ; therefore, there would be unsatisfied restlessness, and therefore no peace, unless horizons were arbitrarily drawn, sounds despotically hushed, and faculties paralysed. Therefore God's immensity is needed for the heart and God's abysmal depth for the intellect. And this makes infused Grace necessary on earth, because the tree must be the same as the root. Ah ! my brethren, we know not what we are. We seem to belong to this valley of mortality, to this narrow region bounded by earth and sky, by birth and the grave ; but all the time our inheritance is—not the universe, for that is too small—but the infinite ; space, light, joy, and immortality, which can only come from one Fount of Being and one Plenitude of Existence, Who is at once our Maker, our Father, and our Last End.

It is right, therefore, to say that Almighty God was to be expected to give to man the gift of Revelation. It was to be expected, from what we know of ourselves and our own needs. But if we lift our eyes from ourselves to God Himself, then the expectation becomes a positive certainty. God could not have left us without Revelation, because He is God. Let us remember that it was His will to create a free and responsible creature, who was to undergo a probation for immortal life under the conditions of materiality. He was, therefore, prevented from giving overpowering light. He could not write His Revelation on the skies. This would have destroyed responsibility. He could not give us the intuitions of pure spirits. He could not at once gather us to His bosom. He must

leave us to our human condition, to our responsibility, to our trial. But, short of this, we may safely say that there is nothing He has not done for us, or would not do for us. This, to me, seems an evident truth, even if we had not the New Testament. If there be a God, what must that God be? He has described Himself in the Holy Scriptures; but the human mind can verify every point of that description by its native perception. God is Almighty, and All-Wise, and Infinite; let us leave these attributes on one side. What concerns us is, that He knows us, and calls Himself persistently our Father; and seems to make a boast of His Mercy. He knoweth our frame, as He says; He remembereth that we are dust. He considereth all our steps. His eyes are on us, and His ears attentive to our prayers. Our groaning is not hidden from Him. He filleth heaven and earth, yet His dwelling place is among the children of men—a God near at hand. He is our firmament and refuge, our protector and deliverer; no sooner do we cry out than He hath mercy on us. This is His picture of Himself; and it is also what we can see He must be if He is God at all. For why did He make us? To torment us, to crush us, to destroy us? Reason revolts at the idea. Therefore, to bless us, to uphold us, and to make us happy. A thousand falls of a thousand parents could not alter this. If one way failed, He had to find out another. That God is our Father is essential to His being, once we are created. And His own name for Himself is Father, and Father of mercies and God of all consolation; and the reason

which He Himself offers for having bestowed upon us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace, is simply that He hath "loved" us (2 *Thess.* ii. 15). Therefore, that Being, whose very nature makes Him kind and merciful and loving, must radiate love and mercy as the sun diffuses light. And so, to begin with, He must give His creatures, who by the very make of their beings can neither have continuous inspiration on the one hand, nor self-produced and tranquil certainty on the other—He must give them that communication of His voice which shall give the humblest among them that sure and restful knowledge of Himself and of spiritual things which alone can enable him to lead a life which will prepare him for eternity. O Heavenly Father! O loving Father! pardon those who by false science are led to deny that Thou dost speak to us! Forgive them that make Thee a God afar off, and not a God near at hand! (*Jer.* xxiii. 23). Move yet more mightily over the face of these troubled waters, and send forth brighter and brighter the beams of Thy Spirit, that men may know Thee better, and come to understand that if Thou wert silent, God Thou couldst not be!

That we live in a generation which persistently refuses to acknowledge Revelation, is but too true. Whether it be the original Word of the Spirit, or the perpetual Ministry without which that Word cannot continue to be a living Word, the great effort of the spirit of evil is to deny its possibility. And there are thousands and hundreds of thousands of so-called Christians in this country who remain silent when the

Bible is attacked, and perhaps feel satisfaction in witnessing assaults upon the Church, because they do not see the vital interests that are here involved. For the question is: Can mankind have Religion at all except by external teaching? My answer, as the answer of every man who has given serious thought to the subject, must be emphatically—No! The cessation of external teaching means the settling down upon the world of the dark cloud of Heathenism, which was lifted from its surface by the Sun of Justice. The world cannot make its religion for itself. To ask man to think out religious truth for himself is to mock him. It is the fashion of the hour—the cant, I would almost say—to invite every man to independent thought. “Think,” say the philosophers and the writers and the crowd of empty journalists who live by dressing up the scraps of the tables of their betters—“think for yourselves. Accept nothing on trust. Your religion will be all the more true and deep.” To whom are these words addressed? First, they are addressed to the thousands, the millions, of working men and women who eat their bread by the sweat of their brow. They are addressed to the illiterate poor in the cities and towns, in the fields, the factories, the docks, the mines; to the men and women who read with difficulty, and even if they read cannot put one premiss to another; and who, even if they could read and could reason, have to work hard from morning till night. What a mockery to tell a working man—the anxious breadwinner of a family, who walks out to his work in the

morning hardly refreshed, and comes home at night tired out with toil—what a mockery to tell him he must devote his mind to find out whether there is a God, whether he has an immortal soul, and whether there is life after death! Hard grinding labour, from the morning when they rise reluctantly to the evening when they sink down again, weary and overcome, to eat and then to sleep—is this a school where men can settle these deep questions of spiritual truth?

And if you go higher in the scale, and take the classes that are better off and have more leisure, the mockery is still the same. Look through all the grades of the great middle class, from the well-to-do artisan to the member of a learned profession; think how full of work their life is, how busy their brains and hands; remember how all the world over it is the condition of a country's advancement and prosperity that the immense majority of its citizens dedicate their best and longest hours to the production in one shape or another of wealth; reflect that you probably do not know one man in this class whose opinion you would take as decisive in any matter outside his own business; and then say whether it would not be a wild delusion to suppose that from these busy workers there could come any clear or adequate system of natural theology or natural law. Invite them to prove the existence of God, to lay down what is virtue and what is vice, or to formulate a definition of immortal life, and you mock them. They have to live in the world. Their minds are full of money; they have ventures at home and abroad; their days

are mapped out; they study the secrets of science; they are working the mills and the printing presses, the making, the counting, and the carrying of this unresting world. Teach them; let truth be offered to them, and they will look at it; they will most likely recognise it when they see it: but do not mock them by asking them to supply a darkened world with its necessary Light.

And even if we could stop the world's work, and give men leisure, with every chance and opportunity to ponder, to examine and to decide, a moment's thought will convince us that we should be little nearer the end. I will not dwell on the infinite variety of conclusions, the infinite diversity of opinion which would be the result of appealing to the reasoning of the multitude. But, let me ask, is there one man in a thousand, or in ten thousand, who, if he had the chance, would give his life to religious thought? And if he could, how soon would he arrive at practical conclusions? A man cannot afford to wait for his religion till his hair is grey. He wants it in youth as well as in mature age. He needs it as soon as he sets his foot on the burning sands of this world. He needs it the very moment his passions and lusts begin to war against his higher instincts and his manly reason. He must have it as soon as his heart begins to be able to love and his reason to look round for something in which to rest. And you tell him to search out his religion for himself! You bid him sit down and study in the early freshness of his life, in the immaturity of his powers; you bid him to inter-

rogate heaven and earth and his own consciousness; to read the history of bygone systems, and compare the thoughts of sages dead and gone; to work out problems in metaphysics and ethics which have baffled keen minds of long-lived thinkers on the Ganges and the Nile, in the heart of Asia, in the gardens and porches of Athens; and if he obeys you and succeeds, what has he gained? Perhaps, after years of meditation, after youth has passed into maturity, maturity into age, and age into decrepitude, a faded, wrinkled, feeble man will announce to the world that he has made up his mind that his soul will live for ever! And also, perhaps, another white and worn philosopher will declare at the same moment that the conclusion of his own life-thought is, that nothing certain can be known about soul or body, life or death. I could point out to you the men who have had their chance, and taken it—men of grand gifts, of studious temperament and abundant leisure, from the days when Socrates, about to die, declared in hesitating accents his belief in immortality, and the friends around him wept aloud, to our own times, when lives have been spent, intellects wrought to the utmost, and great books launched upon the world, to deepen the darkness of poor humanity—to perplex more hopelessly than ever a generation unable to help itself.

Therefore, let us thank God that mankind is taught. It is easy to verify the credentials of a teacher. Expecting a teacher, as our reason obliges us to do, we have not to search the horizon long before we can

recognise him coming towards the souls to whom he is sent. God has spoken, and chiefly by our Lord Jesus Christ. That Divine Teacher summed up all that had been taught before. But He did more than that. He left His Spirit in the world. A Revelation that in any generation should become voiceless and dumb would be of little use for the millions of men. Above all, a Revelation which was to be so rich, so ample, so consoling,—a Revelation which was not only to make God always clear, and the world to come, but was to keep God in the Flesh before men's hearts by infallible teaching, sacramental ministration, and the perpetual Presence and Sacrifice,—a Revelation such as this, which is the Christian Revelation—must never be doubtful or obscure. Therefore was the Spirit sent and given; therefore is the testimony of the Spirit always with us in the teaching of chosen men. Thus is fulfilled the need of man and his Creator's love. He is taught; happy, if he knows who his lawful teacher is. If he do not know this, let him not suppose he will escape being taught in some fashion or other. Men here and there pretend to independent thought; yet even they absorb more teaching than they will admit. But the millions make no pretence. They clamour to be taught. Wherever they are gathered together, if the real teacher be not there, some self-appointed teacher must set up his chair. The people will follow those who cry the loudest or talk the best, be they clothed in surplice or in gown, be they of the university or of the street, be they makers of books or preachers of

sermons. The generations, as they come up, are taught; at the mother's knee, by the father's word, in the school, in the meeting-house, by the press and by the friends they live with—they are all taught. They follow one another like droves of unreasoning animals. Here and there a man is original, new, attractive; such men change the direction of the unceasing stream. But the multitude must be taught, and is taught. If the good teaching holds the land, then all is well. Oh! how we should pray that the good teaching, the true teaching, may prevail!

The good teaching! It does not debase or humiliate the human spirit to be taught. Rather, my spirit cannot realise itself until it hears a voice. Like the eye of the eagle, it kindles in the beam of the rising sun. Like the plain, the forest, and the ocean, it is only in its beauty when that sun has risen. How the earth answers the challenge of the sun! The vast surface leaps to meet the beam, and shows its new life in a thousand changing tints; the hills rejoice, the sea spreads out its royalty; the leafy kingdoms tremble, the brown earth smiles, the deserts glow; a thousand voices dumb before are heard, a thousand fires are lighted up, a thousand rills and springs run lavishly. So it is with your heart and mind. They never live till the Spirit shines upon them. Science, skill, the stored knowledge of a hundred generations, the books of a thousand libraries—what are they? Unless they are touched with the Revelation of God they are poor, evanescent as the morning mist,

barren, dull and useless. But "Thy testimonies, O Lord, are wonderful; therefore my soul hath sought them. The declaration of Thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones" (*Ps. cxviii* 129).

MYSTERY.

“We speak Wisdom among the perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world . . . but we speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery.”—
1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

RELIGION is either the most extreme folly, or else the anti-religious are the most utterly mistaken of men. There is no medium. There is no possible compromise. Religion means a theory of duty and happiness which must be denied and scorned by those who have no religion. Religion means the unseen, supreme and infinite God—the unknown, mysterious eternity. Those who deny the true God, or misconceive Him, or who reject immortality and the life to come, have nothing left but the life that is passing away, and their hope is bounded by death. The two views have different aims and purposes; life, faculties, and surroundings have different colours and different meanings. It is as if two shipwrecked men found but one tree upon their desolate island, and one wished to rest and sleep beneath its branches, whilst the other was eager to cut it down and build a boat to carry him over the waters back to the home he had left.

The Christian's world is the wider of the two. It

is easy to see how Religion, taken in its full and adequate sense, indefinitely enlarges the universe we have to deal with. This world shrinks—yea, all the systems of all the worlds shrink—to a very little compass when we believe and hope. The world of sense and time is very small compared with the world of Mystery. For all that is beyond experience and sense is, in some sense, Mystery. The Christian lives on Mystery, and loves Mystery. There is no denying it. There is no need to deny it. Just as some of you love to gaze upwards into the depths of the starry heavens, and lose your thought in startling fancies as you realise by momentary flashes of imagination that unbounded space, so the Christian intelligence delights to realise spiritual heights and depths, wide realms unbeginning and never-ending, which it can know each day better and enjoy each day more, and yet cannot exhaust in all the days of eternity.

As I am speaking on Mystery, I will begin by giving the reason why, as it seems to me, all human Religion must be mysterious. It is because man's mind must live in a spiritual realm, and because the spiritual realm has no real horizon. Religion means God, the soul and immortality. But these things are outside of experience, and they cannot be easily grasped or defined. It is of them that Isaias wrote: "From the beginning of the world they have not heard nor perceived with the ears; eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee" (*Isaias* lxiv. 4). There are proofs of these matters; all Christians insist

that the dogmas of Religion can be proved with the kind of evidence that is proper to them. There are proofs, and there are definitions, and there are explanations. But there is not ocular demonstration; there is no length or breadth or colour; there is no handling and weighing and measuring. It is the realm of the spiritual. There, looking beyond the horizon of our earthly life, we try to see our own beginnings, and what went on before we were; who formed us and placed us here. We feel the solid earth we stand on, and we see the sky above us; but we think we can see right through earth and the containing firmament, and come to know the beings or the forces which are beneath our feet and over our heads and in all the spaces which are round about. We know the fact of death; the law of death, which, like a huge black cloud immovable, shuts us out from what lies so near us; but we rightly believe that we have eyes to pierce that awful darkness and make out the land of futurity which it seems to cover—the country where our long, long life must be. There are beauty and order and strength in man, and in the things which surround him; but we have that power within us which seeks the fount and origin of these in sublimer altitudes—in a grander sphere. Earthly Goodness and human Truth are lovely and desirable; but to our reasoning mind they seem to be only faint reflections of some brighter fire, some ruling, flaming Sun which throws its beams through universes which we can only faintly picture to ourselves. The rule of Right and Wrong, of Justice and of Sinfulness, is

written on our breast as on tables of the Law; but this responsible Conscience of ours, with all its principles and codes, is not self-inspired: some one has formed it; some Hand has written out its oracles; it has been at some time, high up on Sinai, wrapped in the cloud of Divine influence, in intimate communion with a Supreme Voice. That Voice—that Hand—we can know, we can prove, we can feel, in the land of Mystery. The more we lift ourselves from the earth and sense, the more we can know of Him Who made us as we are, and gave us the gifts we have. The more we know Him, the better we know the Mysteries of His reign and His kingdom; the lot of the good; the doom of these wicked. These Mysteries we can pierce, yet cannot penetrate. Then, our religion, which even thus far is a religion of Mystery, teaches us that He whom our natural powers can know and can rejoice in, has spoken to us with a word which is not merely natural. If man's own powers lead him to Mystery and open to him a realm of unspeakable heights and distances, what kind of a universe must God's revelation open out? O Blessed Trinity, more glorious than any new world which men sailing on the seas have discovered! O wonderful Incarnation of God the Son, more full of illumination than the sunrise which changes the earth from dark to light! O gift of the Eternal Spirit, more mighty than fire and flood and all the elemental powers of the world! O holy Church! O Sacraments! O Eucharistic Presence! O searching Word of God—that form a universe more rich and varied

and lovely than any fabled kingdom down in the ocean's bed where gems and coral lie! These are our inheritance of Mystery. This is the realm in which the Christian must live, and living must rejoice.

To refuse, then, to admit Mystery is to refuse to admit Religion. To admit a God who is not mysterious is to deny God altogether. To profess a belief which has no Mystery in it is to be an utter unbeliever.

And now it is worth our while to penetrate more deeply into this matter, and to try to discover the very reasons and essential causes why man's spiritual nature must have Mystery, and how it is that without Mystery he cannot live the true life of his soul.

For the moment I do not define Mystery; I do not distinguish the senses in which the word is used. Let us say that a Mystery is that which the mind can feed upon, yet which it cannot completely or adequately grasp. It must be something that is intelligible in its terms; something which can awake a responsive echo in the reasoning mind. Mere sounds, to which no intelligible meaning could be given, are nothing to the mind except sounds. Such sounds can hardly be called words; as words they do not come within the sphere of the mind of man. No! A Mystery is not a senseless succession of sounds, or an irrational incantation, or a charm. It must be couched in words which we know, and must assert a relation or connection as to which we are not wholly ignorant. If I pronounce with reverential breath the formula of the highest Mystery of all—"God is One

Nature in Three Persons"—not one of these words is unintelligible, and the sentence itself is, on the very face of it, not empty sound. But the intelligibility of a Mystery may be greater or less. Any man, any child, may wade into the restless tide of the ocean. But there are shores where you may walk out a long distance before the water rises over your head, and other shores where but a step or two will carry you beyond your depth. And to one man it may be given to pierce more deeply into the heart of a Mystery than to another; and the same man may, by various gifts and powers, be able to see more and more as his life lasts and his efforts go on. For a Mystery is not a dead wall. It is rather a tropical forest, luxuriant and immense. It has its difficulties; but its difficulties are not those of the adamantine rock or the absolute darkness of chaos. With all its difficulties, it holds such treasures of light, of beauty, and of riches that every explorer may find not only enough to make him rich and glad, but may grow every day more rich and every day rejoice the more, whilst the heart of the Mystery is yet as far as ever from discovering itself to his utmost search.

Now, a very little reflection will show that it is this very condition of Mystery—that it yields, and that it is inexhaustible—which makes it the proper food for the immortal spirit of a man.

We need not here discuss man's nature; its twofold character of the animal and the spiritual. It is sufficient to say that, as the whole world and every age admits, his nobility lies in his exalting the spirit

above the flesh, the rational above the animal. We call those savages who have not learned to do this; and brutes if they know better and yet refuse to do it. The savage, or the degraded man, uses his senses very much, his mind very little. He holds fast to the ground he stands upon, and he is ready to fight for more. He follows the prick and the spur of his appetites and lusts. He knows no law but the law of the strong. Hence, as far as he can, he makes this world a scene of greed, of selfishness, of shame, of violence and of blood. But, on the day on which the light of a Mystery dawns upon him, it is as if a heavenly spirit had come down and commanded confusion to cease. Perhaps his first glimpse of the spiritual world is his discerning that he has a mysterious power of self-control. He has that in him which can stop him in the headlong rush of greed and murder. It seems to him as if he had another nature—another man—in his own breast, which can command his hand to drop the knife and quell the fury of his passion. Then, may be, he is led on to see that if he could control himself and those about him could control themselves, there would ensue a mysterious state called Peace; and Peace would mean growth, and plenty and prosperity. But next it comes to him that there *ought* to be peace and stability, each man having his own and the fruit of his work; and then the mighty Mystery of Law rises in his mind—Law which comes out in his intelligence like a fair city on a hill-side when the mists of morning clear away—which comes out under the

touch of things around, but which is rooted invisibly in the being of a Supreme One Whom he will know better before long. The Mystery of Law gives him occupation for many a generation, and meanwhile violence and lust diminish. For with Law comes the Mystery of Right and Wrong; and with right and wrong comes the future life with its retribution; and from Law and Morality comes the thought of God. I do not say that any savage tribe or individual ever advanced exactly on this road; for a primitive Revelation has made such theorising false or uncertain. But nature by herself would so progress, as history abundantly can prove. And every step would be a step of Mystery; a step further into the tide of a boundless sea, where strong hands were of no use, and brute muscle valueless; where by degrees the very earth, with all its growing things and multitudinous life and its habitations of men, would seem to shrink and grow dim amid the play of the awful forces of the unseen universe which was lying all about it.

Thus, the most elemental thoughts or conceptions which lift man above the earth are Mysteries; thoughts full of light, yet so deep they can never be fathomed or adequately apprehended.

But Mystery was to do more for man than this. That God Who is the most inscrutable yet the most intelligible of all Mysteries, having given man a spirit, and having given that spirit Mystery as the atmosphere and soil of its life, was to feed it on still higher Mysteries. The laws of nature are mysterious,

and their investigation fills the mind with light and pleasure, and brings numberless benefits to mankind. The laws and history of humanity are mysterious, and their study lifts the intellect up to the level of great truths. Form, colour, order and harmony, each in its way is exhaustless, and each enlarges man's dwelling place, and, in some degree, helps him to trample on his baser self. And there are men in our own day, representing the wisdom of this world, who say that these are enough—that we need only study nature and man; and our existence is justified, all our purposes are fulfilled, all our lawful questionings answered. They say this in spite of experience, in spite of the past. The truth is, that the study of Nature indicates and discovers GOD; and when the spirit of man has once detected God, like some keen bird that in the windy heights and distances of the sky has scented its natural prey, it must follow the trace; slowly, perhaps feebly; intermittently, but on the whole surely. Therefore the mysteries of nature and the mysteries of man are not enough. We must have the Mysteries of God. God must be asked to speak. God must be prayed to draw back a little that veil which covers the things of heaven.

He needed no asking, for He has done it from the beginning. A Mystery, as Christianity understands it, is an utterance of God in which the terms—that is, the main words—or, at least, the relation between the terms, is not only difficult to make out by study and application, but is absolutely impossible to be adequately grasped by any human mind. Thus the

sentence, "There are Three Persons in One God," is a Mystery, because it is utterly impossible for man's mind not only to prove it on evidence, but adequately to know what it means. Again, the Divine revelation formulated by St. John, "The Word was made Flesh," is a Mystery, because one at least of the terms is not adequately comprehensible, and because the connection between them here revealed is also beyond our power to see as it is. And, once more, the article of our Faith which lays down the conversion of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ by consecration, is a Mystery, because this change is outside of natural law, because we cannot follow it with any of our faculties, and because the exact way in which it happens cannot be completely understood. These are examples of Mystery; but in truth every article, or dogma or sentence, in which the name of God occurs—in which His attributes are named, His love described, or His operations expressed—is a Mystery, because it holds within it the name of the Infinite.

Now, the Catholic teaching is, against Deists, and Rationalists, and Agnostics, and all who deny supernatural religion, that the Christian Mysteries, so far from being senseless formularies, are abysses of light and instruction and encouragement; that they draw a man's heart most powerfully to God; and that the very essential element of darkness which they contain is man's most salutary discipline.

There are three things that a man's religion must do for him, or it is not worthy the name of religion:

it must make him worship the supreme God; it must teach him and help him to practise self-restraint; and it must satisfy, at least provisionally and in hope, his best desires and aspirations. Christianity, let us observe, does all this by creating a new world—the world of spiritual things—for man's spirit to live in; and the world of spiritual things is the world of Mystery.

If we, first of all, turn to the worship of God, we are struck by the power of the revealed Mysteries in drawing us near to Him. To draw men to God, they must be made to know something about God. Men cannot be drawn to an abstraction—to an airy, unsubstantial phantom, to a mere phrase, or to a being who shrouds himself utterly in the recesses of immensity and infinity. The Christian Revelation boldly grapples with this difficulty. It reveals God. It dares to describe God. God is put before us as Personal. We know what that means. A person is not a stone, or a plant, or an animal; a person is one who has consciousness, speech, faculties, an existence of his own, and a heart to answer other hearts. God, then, is Personal—we can speak to Him and He to us; and we can understand each other. All the ancient philosophies did not arrive at this. But the Christian Revelation could not stop there. God cannot be a Person altogether as a man, as God is the Infinite. What kind of a Person is the Infinite? The answer is, One Nature, but Three Persons; one in substance, yet threefold in Personality. O holy and sublime flood of light from the everlasting heavens!

We adore; we cannot comprehend! Yet how much it does enable us to comprehend! First, that there is a difference—deep, immeasurable. God is not as man. Beware how you speak of Him. Use your human phrases, your earthly analogies; but when you have heaped up all your intelligence finds to describe Him by, stop reverently, and say, Here God only begins!—the rest is hidden from my eyes. All that a father is, He is to men. But, besides all that He is, or does, as the Lord of the created world, there is, within His own essence, an inconceivable fruitfulness, an adorable exuberance of being, which is expressed by the words Son and Holy Ghost, Persons proceeding from the Father, within the bosom of Divinity itself. No tongue can describe it; but because it has been revealed by these two familiar names, a whole realm of light has been opened to our contemplation; and as long as we keep within the landmarks of Catholic Truth our minds and hearts may feed upon their names and grow in their Divine effulgence. Thus we draw nigh to Him both by what we see, and by what we cannot see. By what we see, our intelligence is illuminated; and because there is a line beyond which we cannot see, we fall down in humble faith and adore.

I cannot here dwell on the Incarnation. Of all Mysteries, this is the one which was intended, so it seems, to bring God and man nearer together, by revealing God's love, by revealing the value of the soul, and by showing us our God as a man with human heart, human affections, and most truly

human suffering. But this would require a separate sermon. What I am saying is rather to draw your attention to the Christian Mysteries as a whole, and to point out to you how they help man to worship. For what is it that is the opposite of God's worship? Is it not self-worship? When a man has nothing but this world, he is his own centre. He lives for himself alone. He thinks of himself, plans for himself, strives for himself. His measure of things is the good or the evil they bring to himself. He may not fight or snatch like a savage; civilisation has other ways of taking what it wants. He may temper his selfishness with a kind of philanthropy; but it is only his neighbours' bodies that he cares for, not their souls. He may seem to take wide views, and to feed his mind on the study of facts and laws; but his widest view does not reach beyond this earth, and this earth is useless, except to minister to himself. He never looks up, or adores, or prays. But let him come to believe—let him accept Mystery—and all is changed. Suddenly his world grows immense. He is like one who has lived all his life a prisoner in a narrow cell, and one day the walls of his prison crumble into ruin, and he finds himself face to face with the sweet and solemn earth, and the soft hills in the distance and the glorious sun. The Christian heart lives in the presence of grand and lofty things. Itself is a very little thing; the things beneath its feet—I mean earthly things—are poor and miserable; but God and His attributes, Jesus Christ and His Divine career, the Church and the presence of the

indwelling spirit, these are large things—wide-spreading, stupendous, overpowering. The sight of them kills self-worship. The glory and the shining of them dims the earth. The thunder of their motion arrests the senses. The majesty of Him Who made them and is their ruler crushes poor humanity to the earth. Beaten, bewildered, yet sweetly satisfied to live its life in such a Kingdom of God, it cries out, O wide realm of God's mysterious revelation, let me be thy citizen, and find my end and bliss in taking for the sovereign King of my heart the King who rules and reigns in thee!

For, whatever men may say, it is the infinite element in Christian mystery which makes Christianity so attractive to the heart of man. Science and civilisation, art and literature, are good. So are the earth and sea, and commerce and the manifold labour of man's hands. But we want more than this. In our joy and sorrow, in our fears and hopes, we want more than bread and luxuries can give us. So, philosophy is good, and the speculations of the wise on duty, on life, on happiness. But we want more than philosophy. We have boundless faculties, aspirations, longings, hopes; and no religion which has not the infinite in it can satisfy us. Not only you cannot worship unless you believe in an Infinite God, but you cannot love wholly unless you believe in illimitable perfection and also in reciprocal love; you cannot strive unless you believe in the final victory of the right; and you cannot surrender your life with resignation unless you believe in a never-ending

eternity. There is only one kind of God Who can satisfy the infinite variety of human beings—all their ideals, all their attractions, all their forecasts, all their lawful hopes. That God is the God of the Christian Mysteries. There is only one God Who is both perfectly tender and perfectly just and perfectly strong; the God Who did not relinquish His immutability when He took flesh; Who was born in a stable without leaving His heavenly throne. There is only one view of morality which reconciles the trampling on self with ultimate happiness; that is the Mystery of God's judgment. No explanation of man's greatness and his littleness is adequate which does not admit original sin and Divine Grace. No civilisation or progress can be true or complete which does not take into account the highest of sciences, the most human of all arts—the science of divinity and the art of training the soul to heaven. The Christian—the Catholic—Creed is a heavenly code which the deepest thinker cannot see through and through, and yet which the little child at the altar can usefully and intelligently take in. No other religion can be the real religion of man.

There is great reason to rejoice in the opening of a Church. A Church is in many ways the house of God and the home of the Christian man. But in no way is it more truly God's house than in this, that it gathers the immortal souls of God's creation to hear about Himself and His Mysteries; nay, not to hear about them, but to witness them. For a Church is a place of Revelation; it is a Thabor, where glory is

seen to shine, and awful words are heard. It is in a Catholic Church more than anywhere else that the heart realises the world of Mystery—God's presence, God in the Flesh, man's intercourse with God, God's constant fatherly love and communion with man. This lofty roof lifts the spirit to heavenly spheres. These solid walls and columns represent the Faith and Hope by which, as St. Paul says, we prove the things that appear not, we hold in our grasp what is to come. That altar and sanctuary is an earthly figure of the great white throne where the Ancient of days sitteth for evermore, where the Lamb lies slain, the Seven Spirits burn in adoration, and Angels ten thousand times a hundred thousand sing their morning and their vesper hymns for all eternity. And these ministers—the Pontiff and the anointed priests—they are no longer men when they are before that Presence, but the embodiment of that Apostolic mission which was created when the Lord said, "Behold, I send you. Go and teach all nations ; and I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." Let us thank God for a new Church, then. And may He bless pastor and people, and all who are concerned in its beginning, its carrying out and its completion, that Faith, Hope, and Charity may grow and increase, and that the mysterious "Kingdom" of the Living God may "come" more and more every day in their hearts and in the hearts of all men.

III

THE SCIENCE OF GOD.

(Preached in St. David's Church, Cardiff, during the meeting of the British Association, August, 1891.)

"All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God."—*Wisdom* xiii. 1.

THE meeting of the British Association in this town reminds us of a danger which is never far off when men unite to proclaim the advancement of knowledge and to celebrate the triumphs of science. The hard words which St. Paul in his day applied to human wisdom are as true, in their spirit, as ever they were; every honest preacher of the Gospel is bound to understand and to adopt them; and unless the Gospel itself pass away, there is no chance of those words being allowed to be forgotten. There is, and there always will be, a sort of science which "puffeth up," or which fills man's heart with dangerous self-sufficiency (1 *Cor.* viii. 1). There is a "human wisdom" which will assuredly "come to nought" (1 *Cor.* ii. 6); that is, which will some day be proved to be essentially wrong. There is a spirit of knowledge which lifteth itself up against the Spirit of God, and which has to be fought against and beaten down,

first of all in every man's own heart, and next in the world at large (2 *Cor.* x. 5).

But we must observe that neither the Apostle, nor those preachers of Christ's word who follow him, ever say one word against knowledge itself. To search out and to put in order the facts and phenomena of the world in which we live may be very praiseworthy; it is certainly not bad or wrong. Holy Scripture, when it blames, blames the men who know, not the knowledge which they possess; it censures them, not because they know, but because they neglect other knowledge, or because they recklessly reach out their hands to touch a sacred Ark which is not committed to them and their methods, or because they bitterly oppose and pursue those who believe that of all knowledge the knowledge of God is what most concerns men made for immortality. It becomes all who are on the side of Jesus Christ to maintain and uphold that it is more important by far to know the Creator than the creatures He has made. And they must go further than this: for men of science in this country are men who, as a rule, would never deny the existence of God. But we have to make it clear to ourselves, and to them, if possible, what we mean by God; to show that that most holy Name is not a mere breath of the lips, or an empty sound; but that it covers a whole kingdom of solid existence and immutable truth, which is far more worthy of investigation and of scientific treatment than aught that the telescope or the microscope can discover. The science of the day is dangerous, because inade-

quate and incomplete. It spends itself on what is little, transient, and indifferent; and it neglects the knowledge of Him Who is the Infinite and the Everlasting.

It is not necessary here to prove that God exists. If there is anything certain, it is that a universe of motion and change could not have initiated itself. Now, to originate motion is to create out of nothing; and such creation implies the absolute and the unbeginning. If reason and reflection tell us anything, they tell us that the intellectual light of the human soul, enabling man as it does to seize and formulate relations which otherwise have no being, is a ray of a Sun shining on all minds from outside the confines of both mind and matter. The ideals of Truth, the conception of Justice—which are identical, radically, throughout human nature—can only be adequately accounted for by the supposition of an Absolute Truth and an Absolute Justice—not an abstraction, but an energy. Those lofty aspirations, that innate certainty of the final triumph of right and justice, and that instinct of self-preservation, all of which are the heritage of the human race, cannot be false or deceptive; they are facts, just as much as the colour of the leaf is a fact, or the shape of the flower; and, like these, they indicate the existence of natural law—a law of the human mind. But how has such a law grown up, or whence has it sprung? Not from molecular action, or from the heat of encountering forces, or from what man drinks in by the eye or the ear; not from these, because these things have it not.

Therefore it is a law of another sphere ; a law which quivers and thrills through humanity, because something which is not humanity has had the making of humanity, and has infused into its mass some kind of likeness to itself. For this something, which originates all motion, which is the sun of all illumination, which is the fountain of all justice and beauty, and the source of all lofty resolution and lifting up of the human heart—this is not a thing, but a Person ; intelligent, just, good and holy, because He is the very spring and law of all these qualities. And that Personal Being must be Infinite, because self-existence implies infinity ; because if a quality or a being be conceived to be self-caused, it must be conceived to exist in the full and ample condition of an absolute quality or an absolute being ; and this means the absence of all limitations.

Thus, without intellectual suicide, it is impossible not to admit the existence of God.

Let us proceed, therefore, to prove that it is possible for man to know God ; that the great word which has resounded throughout human history since the first man arose and the first mind took in the significance of things, is the expression of real, solid and substantial knowledge.

We say that God is the Self-existent ; the Absolute ; the Infinite in all perfections. There are objectors who maintain that such words are words only ; that they correspond to no clear ideas of the mind, and are indeed self-contradictory. For all human thinking,

they say, is done by means of mental pictures. There is no idea possible to a man which does not somehow involve size, shape, and colour. You call God the Lord, the Mighty One, the everlasting King; these are ideas which transfer to the conception of God the things you have seen in the kings and lords of the earth. You call Him holy, and wise and just, because you are thinking of holy, wise and just men. You attribute to Him omnipotence, eternity, infinity, because you have seen or heard of power, duration, and magnificence, and your words are the familiar language of exaggeration, not of actuality. For there can be no possible mental picture of infinity or eternity; whatever is conceived is conceived with outlines, limits, and definition. Therefore, the God that you conceive is merely a limited and finite being, a reproduction of your own impressions; and if there were such a God as you speak of—infinite and absolute—you could never know Him. For you cannot walk where there is no footing; and you cannot think that which is outside the grooves and lines in which your mind works.

An answer to this reasoning starts on the mind's view the instant that the objection is raised. For is it not a strange fact, which demands some explanation, that my mind does grasp the idea of a Being Who is beyond time and space, beyond matter, spiritual and living, but with none of the limits in which spirit and life exhibit themselves? It is vain to say that I am mistaking a vague exaggeration for a definite conception. An exaggeration, a hyperbolic

expression, can be reduced to its just terms when it is reflected upon. If I say of a hero that he has the courage of a lion, I am ready to admit, if taken to task, that I mean nothing more than courage of a very high degree. If I say that the tropics are a thousand times hotter than my native land, I do not mean a literal thousand, and I do not insist upon the word. But with my idea of God it is very different. When I say that He has no beginning, no end, no shape, no limit, I mean it. Examine me. Put before me any limitation, and I reject it. Make any calculation, however stupendous in its results, and I do not shrink from it. Heap up all that the mind can conceive that is great and perfect; gather all attributes together, and intensify each with whatever powers your imagination is gifted with,—and I say, That is not God, because it falls short of my conception. I can think of something greater, higher, more august. And if you should go on adding, multiplying, intensifying, as long as time lasted and this planet held her course in space, I could and would answer in the self-same way: My thought is more than this.

Yet we do not contend that either in expression or even in the inmost depths of pure and intense meditation can human effort adequately describe or grasp the nature of that God Who thus shines persistently on human intelligence. The Christian holds himself between two extremes—between the dangerous pride of pretending to sound the depths of what St. Gregory Nazianzen calls “the Ocean of Being, boundless and unconfined,” and the false

humility of asserting that such knowledge as we have is not knowledge in the true sense of the word. Let us, therefore, consider the human Names of the Infinite God. Let us listen to the prayers and the aspirations which have gone up from the vast human heart since intelligence began to exist, and see how truly and how efficiently that heart has made Names for Him Whose full Name no man can know (*Prov. xxx. 4*). Let us hear His own voice from the heavens, using words which indeed are human words, and therefore weak and feeble in proportion to the things they express, but which nevertheless are touched with that supernal fire which gives the divine Names of revelation a power to stir the heart such as no other name has which is heard beneath the firmament of heaven.

Our names for God are human and earthly names. We must begin with the earth on which we stand, and the beings which are around us. But we have a means of separating these names from the things to which they primarily belong. Whether our reason unassisted have invented a name for the Deity, or whether He Himself, condescending to human language, have uttered it, we have that power within us which can transmute the earthly word into signifying something which this world cannot contain. The conceptions which, as we grasp them, take the forms of corporeal objects which are fettered with the limitations of time and space, loaded with the weight of matter, or at best defined in the narrow mould of the mind and of fantasy—these conceptions can be touched as with the point of an Angel's wand, and

made to reflect the light of a far-off sun in a sphere that lies beyond the sight. Reason can lead us upwards out of the flats and the mists of terrestrial experience, and set us on a mountain-top, from whence we can at least catch glimpses of a boundless ocean rolling; an ocean which dark clouds and distance may almost veil from our most persistent efforts, but which we are very sure is there beyond us, clear and visible to powers stronger than our own.

Men begin, like children begin, by calling God by the primal name of Father. It was a name revealed in Paradise; but if no revelation had been made, it would have welled up from human consciousness like the waters that are under the earth. The child takes the word in, and clings to it amongst its very first conceptions; so that hardly does the mother's finger point to the sky when the young intelligence grasps the thought of One Who is above all, kinder than all, mightier than all, to Whom its little life is dear, and Who is solicitous about its every step. In the vast deserts of heathenism, where the shade of death has lain and still lies, the untutored mass of the people have ever been, and are still, aware of a heavenly Father. Amid all superstitions and all false teaching, in spite of ignorance and degradation, may we not hope that as it is undoubtedly true that no instance can be named where a people have not looked up to One above, so in their inculpable ignorance not only will the multitudes escape condemnation, but many will even have elicited, by God's grace, that act of clinging and pious love which will have lifted them

to the seats of the Blessed? The name of Father seems to be God's name of predilection. He has taught us Himself to say it as often as we think of Him. And he who knows God under the name of Father, can it be denied that he has a true and real knowledge of Him? How many things does that short word contain! It tells us of one Who made us and all things; Who orders all this universe for our advantage; Who has made us for Himself alone, with hearts so fashioned that, unless we finally and at last possess Him, they must drag out in unsatisfied anguish all their undying existence. It tells us of One Who will not forsake us; Who leads us, as of old the shepherd led his flock, through the desert to the fold; with His staff protecting us, and providing for us the water of refreshment and the pasture of life; Who permits us indeed to suffer, but only in order to change our deepest trouble into happiness inconceivable. Is not to know God thus to know something about Him? It is in truth a knowledge without which life is a puzzle, an enigma, a mystery. Not to know God our Father is not to know whence we are or whither we go; to have no explanation of suffering and loss, or of the inequalities of nature and fortune, of the triumph of wrong and the oppression of the just. Know God our Father, and all becomes clear; and even if nature cry out and patience be at times over-wrought, yet we know that life and death, time and eternity, my soul and body, and the souls and bodies of all men, are in the hands of One Whose primal attribute is that He loves us.

But the name of Father could not long continue, even in the world's infancy or in the regions of child-like innocence, to be the only name of God. Creation, Providence, and Destiny involve a thousand great thoughts. The grand and fertile conceptions of Law, of Right, of Duty, and of Justice, are part of the light of reason; and the divine Source from which they spring has inspired man's tongue to use them to describe Himself. There are two deep fundamental Names of God which almost sum up our conceptions of His being in the sphere of Morality. God is the Good; God is the Just. Man reads these qualities first of all in the human beings like himself amongst whom he lives. By his reason he can discern the good, and he can distinguish what is good from what is evil. Speaking broadly, and speaking of general principles and not of details, human reason cannot mistake good for bad; and if a man here and there, by force of degradation or of perverted training, seems to do so, the grand stream of human tendency corrects the aberration. Good in nature, then, and in our fellow-man is recognised as good, and is good; it is good in this world, and in the next; good above the stars, as it is good upon this solid earth. Therefore, to describe and characterise God the Creator, we can and may use the word Good. We use it, on the whole, in the same sense that we give to it when we speak of Good in a man. If God's goodness were of a type antagonistic to what our reason tells us is Good, there would be moral chaos; we should have to confess that we could know nothing certain; we should be forced

to call the Omnipotent a deceitful tyrant ; in other words, we should be obliged to admit self-contradictory propositions. Man's most significant Name for God, therefore, is that He is Good ; and when human speech gives Him that far-reaching name, it transfers to the conception of the Lord of life and death that quality which it sees and admires in this lower world. There have been regions of the world in which it would appear that men, in one generation or another, have hesitated to call their Deity Good ; or have even attributed to him qualities which man's common sense has called evil since the world began. This was part of the misfortune of the heathen, and a result of the shadow of paganism ; for reason unobscured must necessarily hold God and evil to be contradictions. But herein we see the advantage and the necessity of revelation. For it is true that in such a matter as this, human reason is on the whole incapable of error ; but just as a great stream runs slow sometimes, and has its eddies and its backwaters, where a hasty glance would almost conclude that the current was reversed, so it is with that stream of general and universal Truth which is generated by the activity of the universal human mind. At times its movement is hard to make out ; in places of the world it twists and turns and almost seems to double back ; and at certain epochs of history the storm water of perverted thought lifts up its level till it bursts its banks and drowns the lands which should be dry. Thus, at times and in places, God's name has been denied or altered to the name of

something else. But His own word has come to the assistance of man's harassed thought; His word has removed barriers, strengthened the weak places, and quickened the deadness of the turbid waters, and man's reason has been helped to be true to its own instinct.

When we call God the Just One, we give Him a name as characteristic of His essential being as the name of Good. That God is just is the explanation of human existence. Could we conceive Him not to be just, we must give up the task of trying to find the key to the life of those wonderful and immortal essences which we know our souls to be. Let us consider for one moment the facts of our condition here on earth. We find that we have the discernment of good and evil, the power to choose between right and wrong, and therefore a moral responsibility which we can no more shake off than we can make to ourselves wings and transport ourselves to another planet. We perceive that we live in a world where what is right is often hindered, where good is thwarted, and evil successful; where nature is silent, indifferent, and even apparently cruel; and where, at a given moment, there is no clear sign of the ruling hand of a superior power. We look forward to immortality; even reason without faith can see that a thinking soul cannot suffer dissolution; and as nothing is ever annihilated, it must therefore continue to live. Now, admit that God is the Master and Lord, and that He is as just as He is good. Then virtuous effort becomes at once far more than a duty; it assumes the character

of provision for the life of eternity. Then evil men and disastrous events cease to trouble the heart's peace, because they cannot reach the goodwill and the springs of praiseworthy intent on which virtuous action depends. Then physical death is not a step into a dark abyss, but the intelligible term of a period of trial. For, made as we are, two things seem necessary to a human soul: first, a period during which it can exercise that marvellous faculty of choice—free will—which is part of its nature; free choice, resulting in merit or virtuous deserving; and, next, an existence of fixed and unchangeable adhesion to good, bringing with it unchequered and continued happiness. And the latter state, being more in keeping with the grand and glorious nature of a spirit, should be the chief, the long, the everlasting condition of its destiny. Thus the conception of a God Who is by His essence immovably and absolutely Just, is the rock on which the moral nature of man rests. Whatever falls, whatever fails, whatever threatens, whatever is gained or lost, God stands the same. As David said in the day of a turmoil which was a type of this chequered human existence of ours, "The Lord is my Rock and my strength. . . . God is my strong one, in Him will I trust" (2 *Kings* xxii. 12). The floods of Belial, the cords of hell, the snares of those who would slay, and the pangs of death itself—all these he had to encounter as we have to encounter them, each in his own career; but "the Lord liveth" was his cry, and it is the cry of every Christian heart which has come to call God by the name of Just.

It would not be possible, within the compass of a discourse, to describe, or even to enumerate, all the names of God. And such, indeed, is not our purpose on the present occasion. What we have rather to do is, to show how these names of Him Who is the Infinite and Absolute really teach us something about Him. Humanity, as we have seen, calls God "Father," and "Good," and "Just". Will it be said that these names are names of human qualities, and that to apply them to God is to make God into a mere man? So it might be if we did not know how to apply them aright. The Holy Scripture is full of human names for God. The Saints of the ancient world, the singers of Psalms, the Seers and the Prophets, found names for Him in every object of creation, and in all that they saw and heard. Their fervent poetic fancy used every noble and beautiful and royal epithet to bring Him more vividly before the sense of their countrymen. He is the King, the Lord, the Most High. He is the holy One, the jealous God, the consuming Fire. He blesses and curses, He is angry, He is merciful and forgiving, He killeth and bringeth to life again. His throne is the heaven of heavens, the earth is His footstool, His dwelling place is in Sion. His eye is on every creature, His voice speaketh in storm and whirlwind; He is awfully hidden, yet is ever nigh at hand.

There is no good purpose to be served by denying, or even by softening down, the human qualities which are attributed to God. I do not say that such speech is indiscriminately to be used. But it is used; and its

use rests upon a principle which is true of every race and people, and in every generation of the world's history. It is part of the language of metaphor, and it is understood as such. God has no body; yet the Scripture speaks of Him as filling the heavens and the earth; because this language gives some idea of the universality of His power and operation. God has no parts or limbs; yet the sacred text speaks of His hand, in order to make men realise that as a man's hand can hold and smite, so God can hold and can smite in the higher sphere in which He acts. The image of an earthly king is weak to express the majesty and might of the Creator; but it is useful in making the mind take in the idea. God knows all things, yet He is said to come down on earth to see what passes there; because whatever accurate and wide knowledge a man acquires by means of this kind, that God has in a degree indefinitely higher; and such modes of speech put this truth vividly and soundly. The changeless and serene nature of the Deity is not subject to any vacillation or any passion; to anger, or impatience, or hate, or envy, or even to love as men feel love's turbulence. Yet these emotions are attributed to Him, because a speaker uses language not only to inform but to produce an effect and to move the emotions; and it is more effective to say broadly, "God is angry," than to say that consequences will follow such as we are prepared to expect from the emotion of anger. I am not denying there is danger, at times and in places, in using anthropomorphic speech. But it is a question of

degree; for it is impossible not to use it. As used by Holy Scripture and by the Church and by enlightened teachers, and as understood by the vast body of the faithful, whether before the coming of Jesus Christ or since, it is true speech, and conveys no falsehood. For it is not intended to describe with scientific precision the nature of Almighty God, but to paint Him as He practically and virtually is in those important relations with His creatures which it is disastrous to His creatures not to realise.

Neither is it merely the physical qualities of human beings or their passions and emotions, of which we must say that they are partial and inadequate as a description of the Divinity. The same must be said of every human characteristic, however noble or beautiful. When we say that God is Good, Just, Holy, and Wise, or that He willeth or knoweth, we apply to Him the names of attributes which are really of and in His Divine Nature; yet not in the sense in which we have found those words as applied to men. God's knowledge differs from ours not only in degree, but in kind; His wisdom, His goodness, is on a different plane, utterly transcending that of men; and all the august epithets which prayers and meditations offer at His feet only indicate God's being, and do not realise it. It is as if we used counters and not things; counters with names written upon them, and not the things for which those names stand. For the nature of God being Infinite, and wholly indivisible and pure Oneness, we can necessarily have no real grasp either of it or its attributes. But we must

never forget that these names are true as far as they go. Nothing in God's most sublime nature can possibly contradict our idea of Goodness, of Justice, of Wisdom. What we say of God is truth and solid knowledge; with this condition only, that we distinctly and emphatically protest that it is inadequate. All the words of human language involve limits, shortcomings, imperfections. Like the incense which typifies the heart's prayer, they look ethereal as they rise from the lips in the presence of God; but they are only earthly smoke after all, and we are conscious of it. Yet they serve their purpose. When, by God's grace, we arrive at the bliss of the vision, and see even as we are seen (1 *Cor.* xiii. 12), we shall find out many a secret; but nothing which that light of glory shall reveal will contradict the humble and feeble words which Holy Scripture and the heart of the instructed Christian through all the generations of their earthly pilgrimage have lifted up in homage to the everlasting throne.

The reason why all human language is, and must be, inadequate to express the being or attributes of God, whilst at the same time it is true and real, is found in God's Infinity. We call God by many human appellations; but we also call Him by names never given to man. We call Him the Infinite, the Absolute, the Omniscient, the Almighty, the Eternal. In the language of the schools He is all that is; not that things are part of the being of God, or that they make Him up; but that His own most spiritual essence includes and embraces all possible being and

powers and perfection and reality, in one pure actuality. He is all that is, all that can be, one and indivisible, from eternity to eternity, the everlasting Now, the unconfined "I am". And as His being is limitless, so also are His attributes; indeed, His attributes *are* His Being.

But of such a Being man can have no adequate mental image. This is true not merely of those mental images which are called "imaginative," and which are really mental pictures reproducing the impressions of the senses; but also of the highest and most spiritual conceptions of the reason. When I have seen the ocean or the mountains, I carry away a mental picture of material nature. God cannot be carried in the mind like that. When I reason on high and spiritual themes—on truth, wisdom, holiness, and valour—I can form to my spiritual sight the idea of one who is true, wise, holy, and brave; but such a one is not, and cannot be, God. For in God these things are boundless, and I cannot make to myself a conception without bounds; these things are absolute, and I cannot grasp them except under conditions; these things are fused in pure Being, and I can only conceive them as qualities.

Yet all this proves that I have some hold on the conception of God. Oh pathetic vision of humanity, which strains and struggles to lift itself from the earth to the skies; which is shut up as if in a prison, yet feels with some subtle sense that the glorious Sun is shining without; which gazes wistfully, like a sailor from the deck, on the silent and inscrutable horizon,

and yet knows from the very weeds of the ocean currents and the faint fragrance of the pleasant air that the wished-for land is near!

There are four steps in our conception of the Infinite.

The first step is to look forth into this universe of men and of things, and to observe being and motion and life, beauty and power, goodness, wisdom, and truth, and to attribute these things to God. For if God be God, He is all these things. But how much more? And then we take the second step. In man, in nature, all these qualities and powers are mixed with imperfection. They are feeble, or they are insufficient, or they are limited; perhaps they are also united with shortsightedness and malice. In God it cannot be thus. No dross of evil, no shadow of inefficiency, no weakness, no ignorance. In one word, there can be in God neither imperfection nor even limit. Therefore, as we have seen, names applied to God are used in a different sense from that in which we used them of anything else. Hence the ancient Fathers would not speak of God's being, God's life, God's wisdom; but they put a prefix to these names, signifying the excellence of being, the excellence of life, the excellence of every attribute.

This second step—this refusal to admit imperfection in God, this removal from all names given to Him of all limitation—seems to be a process which is merely negative. It tells us what God is not, not what He is. But see how, by the alchemy of the mind, out of that wide-reaching process of vehement

negation, there leaps up a positive, definite, almost tangible shape of awfulness and majesty. As the dregs sink down and the dust of earth clears away, and all limits and bounds are suppressed by the activity of thought, there comes by degrees upon the sight a vision which has for its definition and its description that it has no limits, no definition, no adequate description. This is the Infinite, the Absolute. No matter that it baffles our mental grasp—that it cannot all be taken in—that the further we push limits away, the more persistently does a limit seem to assert itself! No matter that as the thought busies itself with one aspect of that glorious vision, the rest of it seems to be for the moment dim and shadowy! No matter; for under all the stress of thought and the complaints of reason and the confusion of mortal sight, there is ever heard, like the roar of a cataract far away, the conviction of the spirit that the Infinite is there.

Those who have the misfortune to be born blind can have no mental picture of colour, or perhaps of shape. No words can describe colour except words which we have first learnt by observation to associate with colour. Yet, would it be true to say that the blind have no knowledge whatever of colour? Is there nothing that colour has in common with other sensations—nothing which may be seized upon by the sympathy of friends and used to convey to the stricken ones some notion of the hues of the sky, the forest and the ocean? To take no other instance, is it not true that as in every species of sensation there

is degree and gradation, so is it with colour? The ear, like the eye, can suffer violence; like the eye, other senses may be soothed, charmed and rocked to sleep, or roused and agitated. There is some analogy between the blare of the trumpet and the violent effect of a startling colour. The dreamy blue of the evening sky is like the caressing touch of a soft hand. The sparkle of the sea on a breezy morning may be remotely understood from the joyous tones of a voice one loves to hear. These are instances of analogy—of the use of words not to describe a thing, but a proportion. It is thus—as the blind know what colour is—and only thus, that human thought can reach, or human words describe, the Infinite.

It will not be denied by any one who admits even partially the truth of what has been said, that there exist the materials for a science which may be called the science of God. For what is a science? Let it be granted that science must rest upon observation and on fact. God is a fact; and He can be recognised as a fact—observed, if you prefer the word. There is proof, not from faith only or revelation, but from reason using the means of natural observation, that the Absolute and the Infinite exists. Once let man's insight get upon the track of God—once let the mind and heart suspect that He exists, and proofs start up into sight as the hills come into view when the dawn appears. The chief office of Divine Faith, at the beginning, is to steady the shifting eye of the reason, and to make it cling devoutly to what it holds already. And once possessed of such a fact as this of

God's being—a fact so fundamental, so radical and so potent—what is to stop the intelligence of man, assisted by the light of Faith, from developing a science that must cast every other science into shadow? Science is not facts; or rather, facts are not science. Science means the formulating of the relations and of the co-ordination of facts. As the Infinite is a fact, it should surely be studied as a fact. There are aspects of the Infinite known to mathematicians; and on the mathematical infinite there have been written a thousand treatises which bewilder the unskilled mind with darkness. But the expert sees light, and rejoices in knowledge. So it is with that Infinite Who is the Personal God. Who can exhaust the relations of the Creator with the creature, of the Last End with the immortal spirit, of Prime Mover with all that lives, of the Heavenly Father with each of His children? Who can sufficiently investigate the attributes of God? What human word is there, or human fact, among all the multitude of created things and their names, which cannot be made to throw some light on God Almighty, if reason bend itself to the task? And if, as Christians believe, there is special revelation about God, the possibilities of a great science of the Deity deepen indefinitely. For we hold that revelation may be proved like other facts. And thus we have in the Bible a whole universe of facts—of description, of exhortation, of history—which widen our conception of the Divine nature. We have, above all, the stupendous fact of the Incarnation, which is the start-

ing point of a science in itself. Thus, God is not only an Ocean of Being, but an Ocean which man can explore, and by exploring live. In the science of God is the foundation of many sciences. Religion, morality, and the love of one another, are shifting morasses, not sciences, unless they rest on the science of God.

My brethren, the Saints and the Fathers, the Schoolmen and the great Theologians, were right. There is a science of God, and it is the greatest of all the sciences. Look around the shelves of great libraries. You behold the work of the giants who studied God, and tried to interpret Him to men. There is Gregory, who has filled tomes with the mystery of the Divinity. There is Basil, who has fought at such length for God's attributes. There is Augustine, who has written of His relations to man's life and spirit, and to the world's history. There is Denis, called the Areopagite, with his sublime researches into the being of the Lord and His Angels. There is Anselm, who lifted a curtain from some mysteries of His existence. There is Thomas of Aquin, who studied Him with the devotion of a Saint, the learning of all the doctors, and a luminous penetration which was all his own, and whom all the throng of following divines, each with his huge volumes of Divine exposition, have agreed to call their master. These men were right. Their spirit still lives in the Catholic Church. But those who do not read the great Catholic treatises do not know of a science of Theology. Outside of the Church, the

science of God is either denied to be possible or it is simply left on one side. The great leaders of experimental science, occupied as they rightly are with their own subjects, ought not to go out of their way to assert that we cannot know God. The universities and great schools of a country must be short of their perfection and shorn of their glory as long as they cannot teach Theology. No literature can be complete which does not boast of great books on the greatest of all subjects; and no nation can give an adequate training to the intelligences of its best men which does not urge them and assist them to study their Creator, for as without Him there is nothing that exists, so without Him there is nothing that is adequately comprehended. Hence each science halts and stops short of its highest developments, unless it can lead its clients up to God. Hence moral truth is half blind, history is a maze without a plan, social economy is a painful failure, and the arts themselves grovel on the earth and give themselves over in venal degradation to the flesh and the senses, unless He Who is the end and the meaning of all created things lifts up the heart and purifies the intelligence. For wisdom, and beauty, and perfect truth and enlightened brotherly love—these are only names of the One Almighty God. And if a man knows little, provided he knows God, it is enough. That knowledge makes up for science, art and reading; for it explains life, and sets man in the right path, and is the pledge of eternity; it fills his spirit with humility, draws his heart to every human soul in the

unity of a common Father and a common destiny, and makes the sunshine of a world where warmth and light of other kinds too often fail. The knowledge of God is for the learned, and it is for the simple. All we can say of Him is far below what He is ; yet the feeblest words suffice, and the thought of the humble is enough. For, in the words of the Preacher, "We shall say much, and yet shall want words : but the sum of our words is, He is all" (*Ecclesiasticus* xliii. 29).

IV.

THE WAY TO BELIEVE

(Preached at the opening of the Church of St. John the Baptist,
Norwich, 29th August, 1894.)

“In the Spirit and Power of Elias.”—*Luke i. 17.*

THIS noble Church, dedicated to God under the invocation of St. John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Lord (the feast of whose martyrdom we celebrate to-day), is the offering of the piety of one whom we pray God to bless and prosper in this world and in the next. When he planned it—when he promised it—it was as a thank-offering for happiness. Since then, and long before even this first portion was finished, God has manifested His holy will in visitation and sorrow. But the founder hopes, and we hope, that none the less our Heavenly Father may bless those who are near to him and dear to him; and no one here present will forget this day to pray for him, for her who has passed away, and for their child.

This Church stands here overlooking an ancient city, where Churches even more august have been consecrated to God in days gone by. It cannot fail to remind us, therefore, on this day of its solemn opening, of the vicissitudes of religion and of faith.

Its stones embody reparation, protest, aspiration. It is intended, not to be a dumb monument or a meaningless expenditure of labour, of art and of treasure; but to speak aloud, to preach and to prophesy. Here will be the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, as handed down in unbroken tradition from the Apostles. Here will be the Christian Eucharistic sacrifice, as it has been kept up in every age. Here will be the Sacraments of the New Law, and the ever-expanding devotion, the pious practices, old and new, of the Faith which is inspired and guarded by the Holy Spirit of God.

And yet to-day it seems to me that this Church, like him whose name it bears, is rather a Precursor than a Messiah. In this land, with all its past history and associations, it is too true that only a small minority recognise either the authority of this sanctuary or the efficacy of this altar. My words to-day, then, may fitly perhaps be inspired by the teaching of John the Baptist. For he came to prepare the way of the Lord. He spoke to those who did not believe. As long as there are unbelievers, it must be the mission of the Catholic Church to try to draw them to faith. John the Baptist did not argue; neither did Elias, the great Prophet whose spirit and power the Baptist was to manifest in those latter days. Elias rebuked kings and slew false prophets; John preached a stern message of repentance. We also must preach Repentance; but as there is here neither Elias nor John, we must show why it is that a non-believer should "repent". I say "non-believer"; and

I am not so much thinking of those who profess some kind of Christianity, as of the large and increasing multitude in this country who do not own to any belief in God or eternity. In their interests, in the interest of all who are only nominally Christians, in the interest of all who are tempted to unbelief, in the interest of all who have to deal with unbelief, let me expostulate to-day—for I call it nothing more than an expostulation—with that spirit of incredulity which makes so many in this generation assert that God cannot be known, and refuse to exert themselves to know Him.

It will not be denied by any one that the human race possesses the idea of God, and that this idea is deeply impressed upon its consciousness and its history. Mankind have the idea of God; and it is difficult to acquiesce in what some scientific men keep telling us—that this universal agreement is a mere bend or curve or blemish, due to historical causes. A widely marked effect must have some uniform cause as wide as itself. On our western shores you see the trees all bending inland, and you know that it is the steady pressure of the westerly winds that has warped them to that shape. What is it that has steadied the human mind to the acceptance of God? Nay, not only turned it to that great idea, but driven the conviction of it right into its powers and imaginations, its traditions and its aspirations? Some impulse as wide and as essentially human as the result. You may call it an instinct, and say that a mere instinct proves nothing beyond its own activity. But can

you justly say that it is a *mere* instinct? In man there are instincts, just as in the lower animals. But the human race does not act by instinct. The human race reasons. Its reason takes hold of its primitive instincts, and scrutinises them with a score of instruments and a hundred processes. The instincts of the lower nature it can train and educate. But the instincts of the spiritual nature—the instinctive persuasions or conclusions of that very intelligence of which reason is the activity—these the reason can examine and test in many ways. It can compare mind with mind; idea with idea; premiss with conclusions; intellectual law with facts of every kind, external, moral, or intellectual; and its own ideas with the development and activity of human thought as shown in history. The idea of God, call it originally an instinct or not, is much more than an instinct now. It has a history, and shows like a tree that has grown. It wells up from the soil of primitive humanity, no doubt; but it has been guided into rivers and gathered into lakes; for the human consciousness, acting upon it, has vainly sought to prove it false, and, on the other hand, has found it confirmed and reinforced in every quarter of the intellectual horizon and in every encounter of the moral forces of the world. It may be an instinct, but long ago it has been shaped into a conviction.

If you ask me what it is that has given substance and form to the conviction that there is a God, I say that it is the discussion of the problem of origination. You could not have had the play and motion of this

universe unless there were a God. I do not speak of the origin of species, nor merely of the origin of life; but of the origin of that primeval fact which we call movement, change, or succession. It is this of which the universe is literally made up; and some will tell you that the world—the earth, the sea, the sky, and the living things therein—are in fact nothing but the effect produced upon your senses by the inconceivably rapid rhythmical motion of particles too small to be estimated by the faculties of man. Did motion once begin? Or had it no beginning? If it had no beginning, then the number or series of movements must be infinite, even now. But an infinite series is an impossibility; that is, as much an impossibility as that twice two should make five. And if the number of motions is infinite to-day, it was infinite yesterday; but to-day it is certain that the number has been added to; therefore one infinite is greater than another infinite. Therefore it must be that we can go back to the first movement—the first shock of change which set the universe in motion, or, if you please, which made the universe what it is. It seems to me—and I frankly own that it is inconceivable that any one can think otherwise—that that primary motion must have been caused by something outside of the universe. It could not have come from nowhere. It could not have come from the dead universe itself, even if it had already any existence. Therefore there was an outside cause.

I am equally clear when I come to the question of the origin of life, or at least of sensation. If to feel

were merely to be acted upon, it would be a different matter. If the too bright sun merely wounded the delicate tissue of the eye, or the fire merely hurt the material we call our body, I should not seek a further power or cause. But we all know that to feel is more than the light or the heat can cause. It is a reaction, one and indivisible, of some single undivided essence. The soul, which is the head-quarters of sensation, must have originated outside of dead and senseless matter. No fresh arrangement of particles—no refining, no intensifying, no quickening of the time-beats of matter—can give that profound difference between the things that are deaf and blind and insensible, and the things that thrill with the shock of feeling. The difference is the difference of existence and negation; and if it ever began to be, as it must have done, it proclaims a cause, in which all that it means already exists, and much more; exists at least virtually.

But—to end this too abstract disquisition—it is when I cast my eyes upon man—upon my own soul and upon yours—that I see most overpoweringly the force of the grand principle that the origin of things is outside this universe. A man is part of the universe; and he is part of the animal and sentient life of the universe; and all that has been urged from movement and sensation can be illustrated and enforced in man. But in man there is also something else. When the explorer in the latitudes of the Pole sees from the deck of his ship the Northern lights streaming up the concave of the sky, he knows that there is something there besides the rocky coast line,

or the silent ice, or the restless polar sea. All through the human ages, amid the fiery dance of the atoms, the long struggle of forces, and the stupendous play of the great physical laws, a certain spiritual light has lighted up the world. It has had its dawns and its twilights, its noontides and its evenings. It has varied in intensity, and the incidence of its rays has shifted. But no generation has ever been without it, and it is the essential prerogative of human nature. It is what we call truth, and justice, and right and wrong, and beauty, and the connection of the final triumph of good over evil. You may analyse it into more component parts than these, or into fewer, according to the power of the prism you may use ; but these are enough to make one certain that there is a power outside this universe. Nay, one ray of this light of intelligence would amply suffice to convince me of this ; for a single intellectual judgment unites things and divides things which are found neither in earth nor sky nor ocean. But if you take the whole steady effulgence of spiritual illumination, you can no more think of its being originated in matter or sense, than you can believe the colours of the sunset to come out of the dank and formless clouds of the evening.

Consider what you have. You have forces acting in a plane altogether lifted above weight, mass, motion, or sensation ; you have the formation of a world, abstract and conceptual, whose very materials are abstract ; so that, compared with them, even the ether is gross, and the structures of the finest imagination palpable ; and you have the universal race of

men, always and everywhere, endowed with the same powers, working in the same material, and agreeing in the immediate and primary results. That light of the intelligence indicates God. That is, it demonstrates an external source; a source which is itself living and intelligent, and therefore personal; in other words, a living Person.

There is one word more to be said. The first, or primary, origin of being, life, and intelligence is, by the force of the terms, self-endowed with these prerogatives. That source is the absolute source. An absolute source, in the immaterial world, is another name for a limitless ocean. And the ocean of being without shore or bottom is the absolute Infinite. Thus the very light of our faculties and the law of cause and effect place within human grasp the infinite and everlasting God.

I would ask you now to follow me into another thought. It is a common thing to hear men say, in this age of culture, that to admit the possibility, or even the existence of God, is not to admit the obligation of any religious profession or of any moral self-restraint. Various reasons will be given for this position—as, for example, that if God made my nature He meant me to live according to my nature; or, that a man's life and conduct are absolutely determined by the conditions which surround him; or, that nobody can be sure, at least in details, what is right or wrong, good or evil. But, without going into these reasonings, I would ask you to consider the very striking idea of human life which we obtain the

moment that we seize the conception of a self-existing, infinite Being.

There is no reason to suppose that a human being ceases to exist at death. Death is only dissolution; no element, even of matter, is ever annihilated; and the spiritual element is an element, and therefore incapable of dissolution. Think, then, of the life beyond the grave. I do not want to import into the idea of that life either space or time or measure. But you undoubtedly have a duration—a duration in which the Infinite God is controller and master; a duration which cannot be ended, for there is no conceivable force that can affect it, and no possibility of the exhaustion of infinite being; a duration which is continuous with mortal life, in this sense that there is in both the same God and the same human beings. Can it be wrong to say that that future duration furnishes the key and the explanation to what we call life? If a man stands in the portico of a temple, it is the temple which explains the portico. To grope about in the porch and never to open the great doors that discover the vista of the interior—would it be reasonable? There are many riddles and enigmas in life—so we are told; and so, at first sight, there appear to be. There are waste of energy, premature death, the mystery of pain, undeveloped faculties, the constant war of the flesh and the spirit, the victory of force over right. But no one would call it waste of energy if what was poured out in this world went to build habitations in another. Death cannot be premature if it is the fitting moment to enter upon one's

true life. Pain and suffering may be, and undoubtedly are, the agents of the purest and most intense spiritual energy—an energy which will show results in the ages which are to run when time has ended its course. Man's faculties, it is true, neither ripen nor bear fruit here on earth. If the human soul is a spirit, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—of which it may not be said to be in some way capable. It has a native power of comprehension, possession, activity, achievement, conquest, royalty, for which time and space offer no field. Millions die in infancy and childhood; other millions in ignorance and savagery; but even the finest of races and the most highly endowed of the men and women who compose them, after the longest life of education and culture, are no better than the trees of the early spring—there is life and growth and the swelling of a bud here and there, but nothing more. Will there be no summer for immortal spirits?

And if men and women are undeveloped in this world, they are also without rest or peace. It is an eternal fact, that man's higher aspirations exist side by side with very low and degraded instincts, and that a man must either fight or sink into the condition of the beast. A generous nature takes up the conflict, and his life is a war. This would indeed be an enigma, for there is nothing like it in nature, were it not for the light from the world that is to be. For if a man conquers himself during a short probation, it is right and natural that he should reign as a conqueror during the long periods when probation

has ceased. Those periods, naturally, are ruled by a different law from that of time. Our reason forces us to think that eternal war cannot be the condition of what God has created. And may we not conclude that peace and a kingdom are for the man who takes the right side? For God will so overrule that it shall be so. Here, in this world, evil often overpowers good, and the brute force of the wrong-doer drives the good to the wall. It is eternity which furnishes the explanation. There is no other. And the explanation goes one step further. If the doer of good is to find himself in the coming world on the side of the Infinite, and carried along in the stream of the power which created and which sustains the universe, what is to be said of the doer of evil? What is to be expected for the human heart which has set itself in opposition? What do we see in nature when nature's mighty laws are interfered with? What, but a tempest, a catastrophe, the smash and destruction of the thing that was in the way, and the final serene on-flow of the everlasting forces?

These views of the origin of things and their fate—of the destiny of man and the reality of God—are to me demonstrable and demonstrated. There is no way to escape them except to cover one's head up in the black cloak of scepticism—to refuse to credit one's own reasoning faculties. They are views which no man has a right to pass by. If the intelligence of our people gave them the attention they deserve, we should have very few professing inability to believe in God and immortality. Such a profession is with

most men chiefly an imitative cry. Some great man has proclaimed himself an Agnostic, and forthwith the educated classes repeat the word; the men with a classical smattering, the readers of newspapers, the watchers of the political game, the skimmers of books, the eager audience of the purveyors of bold novelties in religion and morality—they affect to look on at the world as if the rush of time did not concern them; and they say, Who knows anything? There is no intellectual value in such a *consensus* as this. It is gregariousness, not intelligence; they are a flock, not a school of thought. Because I would defy any one of average mental power to go into these things, and not attain some conviction of God's existence. And as long as they have not taken the means to inquire and the pains to reason and observe, they have no right to say one cannot know; no more right than the man who sleeps in his bed through the night to pronounce upon the constitution of the stars.

But if a man is in earnest in the scrutiny of his own nature and heart, then he will find that the preaching of John the Baptist carries the great lesson which, in this age, as in the days before Christ, prepares the way for faith. The word of the Baptist was "Repent!" It had been the word of Elias in other times, of whom the Holy Spirit says that "he anointed kings unto penance" (*Ecclus.* xlviii. 8). His word came upon the minds of kings, and of all men, like an unction which softened and transformed them, changing their hearts. I would say to every man who thinks that he has caught even a glimpse of

the Infinite God, "Repent!" His very reason imposes upon him the obligation of "repentance". For what is repentance?

The word which the Evangelists hand down as expressing the thought of St. John the Baptist, means a change of the mind or heart. I take it for granted that a man who does not accept God, does not accept the laws of morality. I know well that I shall be met here with a protest. I shall be told that the Agnostic is usually as charitable, as pure, and as honourable as the believer. Let me say, first of all, that charity is not always morality, and that temperance and continence are not always morality, and that honour is not essentially moral. All these things are better—indefinitely better—than their opposites; but they may be merely the play of a proud and fastidious nature, which restrains itself for its own sake. Now, the essence of human morality must be the conforming one's actions to a higher law, fixed, immutable, and universal. But the moment one reasons on these unchangeable and universal laws, one dimly sees God. Any one, therefore, who does not refer his conduct to God, is not in the strict sense moral; because his law is a private law, and the same principle which urges him to self-restraint to-day may license him to indulgence to-morrow. Let me not for one moment be taken to underrate the good that is found in many men who do not believe in God. Perhaps these good men do see something of God, although they will not pronounce His Name. But, after all, it will hardly be denied that with the vast

majority of non-believers morality consists chiefly in external good behaviour, whilst personal indulgence, evil thoughts and desires, mental sins, and all that concerns themselves alone, are judged by a standard, not of right and wrong, but of convenience and prudence. What I say is, that there can hardly be a human being but feels that this ought to be changed. It stands to reason that even if there be clear evidence for God's existence, a vicious man must find it almost impossible to recognise it, because vice occupies a man with the bodily, the earthly, the transient, and blinds him to anything that is spiritual and eternal; just as one who is exploring the catacombs and sewers of a great city sees nothing of the life of the streets or the daylight of heaven. It also stands to reason, that if there be a God, He is a Person, and that our proper attitude to Him is one of reverence, love, and service. Because, remember, our moral light is God's making and God's keeping up, and therefore to obey it is really to obey God. Besides, every glimpse we get goes to show that He must be our true Father and our best Friend. No other conception of a Creator is possible.

The two elements of Repentance, then, are the search for God, and self-restraint from what is seen to be evil. Have we a right—has any preacher who in these days should stand in the deserts with John the right—to call upon the non-believing world thus to change its heart? To me, it seems we have.

You must remember that, as we have seen, there is a strong reasonable case for God's existence. The

argument is, from its very nature, elusive and difficult to grasp with such faculties as we have. But there is no argument to compete with it. Abandon it, and you have no key either to the spiritual or the immortal. It is a view which falls in with the aspirations of human nature, and it has been generally accepted by mankind, whether left to their own instincts or cultivated by education. A non-believer cannot be right, therefore, in paying no attention to it. But observe what this leads to. A man's being is not merely his reasoning faculty. He has also a will, an imagination, and a heart. Truth is not the conquest of the pure intelligence. It may indeed be so in the case of metaphysics or mathematics; but not with any science which affects one's conduct or one's interests. Here, a slight jar of the curious mechanism of a man's faculties throws the judgment off the rails. Here, the hand that guides the reins shakes at an apprehension, pulls hard at a suspicion, or lets the horses run away in a fit of petulance or doubt. No man can justly refuse to bend his will and to soften his heart towards that Being whom he suspects to be so near him. The human heart is saturated with reverence. With all its egotistic self-complacency there is mingled a glad humility, which seeks some great and holy object before which to bow the knee. It is the instinctive emotion of a soul which can never be self-sufficing, but must have access to some source, some fountain, of existence to satisfy its mysterious capacity for what is good and everlasting. The mere glimpse of God calls upon a man's humility. It stirs

him out of his selfishness. It brings him to his feet, to make sure—to interrogate earth and sky, if perchance he is destined to be so happy as to find his sovereign good. Nay, it brings him to his knees; for must he not long? Must he not desire? Must he not feel that if the Infinite is there, never was a Father more solicitous than that supreme Being to be known and loved? And must he not yield to the impulse of his human heart, and ask and pray for light and satisfaction? Yes! If a man is bound to search, he is bound to search with every faculty. He is in the forest, and the object of his search may be far away or close at hand; and he must plunge into its depths and not shrink from its difficulties; he must spare neither his body, nor his cries, nor any means at his command. We find that non-believers are not in earnest. They are cold and unconcerned. They reason a little—a very little. But they shut up their hearts. They spoil, as far as disuse can spoil, many of human nature's essential attributes—its reverence, its humility, and its aspirations after the perfect. Let them change all this. The Precursor has a right to challenge it.

And as for self-restraint, nothing need be added to what has been said already. Here, after all, is the stress of the battle. How many a man will not believe in God—or will refuse to attend to the very question of God—because to believe would mean to be pure, to make restitution, to humble the heart to religion! He cannot but suspect that he is wrong. The grand spiritual laws, even if to him they are

little more than shadows, are shadows which could never be thrown upon his world except by an eternal Being. As long as he refuses to see them, he must be in bad faith. The conviction of the existence of God, being the first of all the convictions on which human destinies turn, must be capable of being acquired by the ordinary mind. If, therefore, a man blinds himself, fetters himself, or brutalises himself, let him not blame his Creator, but let him fear for himself. Let him repent : and the power of repentance will carry him far ; for it is the wind that blows from the deepest caverns of existence, even the breath of the Infinite ; and on the shore on which it blows there is not only the conviction of God, but divine Faith, final and complete, and rest and peace.

V.

THE WORD OF GOD

“And Ezechias said to Isaias: The word of the Lord which He hath spoken is good.”—*Isaias xxxix.* 8.

No servant of God can take too much interest in that wondrous communication of God to man which is called His Word; nor can he show too much reverence for it. It will be profitable, therefore, on a day which for the pastor and flock of this Church is marked by the solemn dedication of a Pulpit, to speak on that holy Word, and to try to understand what it is that we have in the midst of us in that “message,” that “good tidings,” that “proclamation,” as St. Paul calls it, which without cessation makes itself heard even above the noise of the world’s unresting motion.

A “word” is not merely the utterance of a sound. There is something that comes before the work of the organs of the voice. The bird has its song, the animal his cry, the beast his roar; but these are not language. A word is the flash which leaps from one mind to another mind. From a mind it must come, or else it contains only empty air, or at most the inarticulate picture of a feeling. By a mind it must be received, or else it only vibrates in the atmosphere and perishes. A word is the mind’s coinage. The

raw material of articulate sound is seized upon by the spiritual power, and stamped with a superscription and an image; and when it is so issued from the mind's treasury, it passes current in a mental and spiritual world, carrying what is mental into the midst of the world's clash and motion, and creating a mental universe which is as real as that which the eyes see and the hands touch.

But the mind must be first, and the mind's action. Before any word can come forth there must be the productive act of the intelligence—the action of that mighty power of reason in which lies the similitude of man to God. The mind must conceive before she can bring forth. And were there even no external utterance, were the thought simply formed within the intelligence and made solid by the imagination, even then it would be a word, not sent forth, but fully formed.

There is one Intelligence which cannot be adequately described by any human effort, for it is the Infinite. Yet it is an Intelligence; and, in some manner inconceivable, it must form its word before it utters its voice. But the Word of the Godhead is God Himself; a second Person, but one in Nature. Is that the Word, my brethren, of which we are to treat this day? Is that the Word which Moses spoke, which Jesus spoke, which Paul spoke? Is that the Word which we presume to write in a volume; for which we build a chair of doctrine; which we gather to hear from the lips of frail and erring men? Yet why should this be impossible? If Bethlehem is

possible, if Calvary is possible; if it be God Who lay in the manger and Who died upon the Cross—why may it not be God's eternal Word which is uttered by human lips and heard by human ears?

My brethren, the truth is simply this: that no one can understand what is meant by the Word of God, taken for the word of preaching, unless he first sees clearly the great fact that the Word of God is a Person; is God the Son; and that Jesus is the Word of God. The preached Word is only one fashion in which that divine, eternal Word is communicated to men; and if we would reverence it or take it in, we must begin further back.

Of the Eternal Word of God, born of the Father before all ages, consubstantial to the Father, true God of true God, this is not the opportunity to speak at length. How the work of God's communication with man—creation, revelation, redemption and salvation—is specially attributed to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; and how, indeed, the chief communication of all, the hypostatic union, is made between human nature and the Second Person as such, is not our subject at this moment. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity, like all other mysteries of the Divinity, is impervious to our reason; its light does not directly reach our faculties; there is the veil of time, and the veil of the flesh, and the veil of finite infirmity, between our vision and it; yet its light, like the twilight in these climates, is diffused over the sky and the earth, though its own rays be far beneath the horizon of this universe. It is sufficient for us to

know, for the moment, that He Who speaks to us is no other than God the Son. It is the Son Who manifests God. The Son is the brightness of God's glory—according to the phrase of the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 3), which seems to be adopted from the book of Wisdom (vii. 26). It is the Son Who creates the universe, ministering, as some of the early Fathers express it, to the will of the Father, yet with the same power. "Being one," says the book of Wisdom, "He can do all things, and remaining in Himself He maketh all things new" (iv. 26). He "beareth all things by the word of His power," says the Epistle to the Hebrews. "For in Him," says St. Paul to the Colossians, "were all things created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and in Him; and He is before all, and by Him all things consist" (*Col.* i. 16, 17). O mysterious and ineffable work of creation! Foundation of all divine communications; startling beginning of that dispensation whereby God the all-sufficing has made outside of His own Being other things that are beings as well; yes, and not only beings, but living beings and intelligences and persons; so that all these august names which properly speaking belong to God—for God alone necessarily is, and lives, and understands—are now said of the generations which succeed each other on this earth; generations which therefore can no more live, or live prosperously, without their Creator than the ray of the sun could live in space were the sun itself to be extinguished.

The infinite Goodness could not stop short at creation. I do not say that grace, and the supernatural state, are not gratuitous, and that they do not come from the pure bounty of God; but pure bounty may be said to create a kind of necessity, quite as truly as pure justice. Therefore the work of the Word of the Father did not end with the creation of the angels, and of the universe, and of man. Nay, it seems that it was then only at its beginning. There was to be a new creation. Three times in Holy Scripture is it said that there should be a new order of things; first, when the uncreated Wisdom creates the universe (*Wisdom* vii. 26), He maketh all things new; secondly, when the order of Christ's redeeming grace begins, as in *Isaias*, "Behold, I do new things, and now they shall spring forth" (xviii. 19), and in *St. Paul*, "The old things are passed away, behold all things are made new" (*2 Cor.* v. 17); and, lastly, when there is made the revelation and prophecy of Life Everlasting, and when Christ on His throne of final conquest saith, "Behold, I make all things new" (*Apoc.* xxi. 5). The second of these stupendous innovations, or commencements, was a more wonderful creation than the first. It was to rest upon the great fact of all history—the Incarnation. God was to assume a human nature, and to be found by human senses as a man (*Phil.* ii. 7). O sweet and surprising communication of God to man! O revelation, far more eloquent than words, of the meaning of God's love for man, of the value of man's immortal soul! O Word of God, that coming down Thyself didst fill the whole world and every

heart and all the centuries, merely by Thy presence, with a knowledge of the mind of God and of the duty of man! O Word, that from the Manger, and from Nazareth, and from Calvary, didst preach of all divine things in the mere silence of Thy annihilation, and leave nothing more to say as long as time should last!

The visible presence of the Word upon this earth lasted till the bright cloud over Olivet received Him into the heavens. He will be seen again on earth when He shall come to judge the living and the dead. Meanwhile, He is, in many respects, still most truly, really and effectively, in the midst of the children of men. He is with us by that ministry—that body of men which, on His departure, He instituted and endowed with powers from Himself. It is the Church—the teaching Church, as distinguished from the mass of faithful believers—in which the Word of God virtually subsists during all these years that are to pass away until He come again.

The prerogative of the teaching Church is the most vitally important element in Christianity, considering Christianity as a body of truths and practices which are intended to prevail throughout the human race. It is not that a man cannot possibly be saved without priestly help; neither is it that to believe in the Church is enough to save a man; for the Church is only intended to lead the mind and heart to the love of God, to the grace of Christ and to the keeping of the commandments. But, considering the human race as a whole, and considering the whole extent of its duration, these three things are impossible to man

without a ministerial body. All forms of Christianity recognise this to a greater or less degree. The mass of men are too busy, too distracted, too unskilled in thinking, too ignorant of history, and, let us add, too short-lived as individuals, to make out or to keep hold of a religion like Christianity; or, indeed, any worthy religious system at all. But with Catholicism (which we hold to be neither more nor less than Christianity in its adequate acceptation) the Christian ministry is far more vital than with any sect whatever. For Catholicism is, first, a religion with an august daily Sacrifice; next, it is a religion with a Sacramental system; and, finally, it is a religion having power to teach with authority and without error. I will not stop here to prove that each of these things is implied in Christianity as taught by Christ and His immediate disciples. For the moment it is sufficient to state that this is the Catholic view; and, if it be, no words are needed to prove how truly the ministerial body carries on the function of the Word made Flesh. "You shall be called priests of God," exclaimed Isaias in prophecy (lxi. 6); "your name shall be God's ministers." We are "the dispensers of the mysteries of God," said the Apostle. Yes, we are the representatives of Jesus Christ! O dread burden of the Christian priesthood! What election, what training, what efforts can make weak men fit for so high an office? In the ancient law a ceremonial of purification, a ritual of solemn preparation and severe restraint, made the son of Aaron ready for his ministry. What purity, what sacred

rites and lifting up of the heart, can suffice to prepare the priest of the Law of Grace, the priest of the true Sacrifice, the priest whose hand is the Hand of Christ?

The most marked character, then, of Christianity—of the Christian dispensation as it comes from Christ, as it appears in the New Testament, and as it is understood in the very earliest centuries of our era—is that the voice of the Priest is the voice of Christ. And as Christ when He was on earth was a Presence, a Power, and an Attraction, so the Priest has the mission of speaking to the world, first, the word which keeps up Christ's Presence; next, the word of His Power; and, finally, the word of His Attraction.

Christ's Presence is Christ memory. He is departed; He is within the veil (*Heb.* vi. 19). No longer can the sinner confess to Him visibly, no longer can the infirm seek Him out with the eyes of the body, no longer can the curious follow Him from place to place. Yet the sick and the sinful must find Him, invisible as He is; and all men, if they would finally rejoice with Him, must know Him and go after Him. To keep up the memory of Christ, then, is to keep up His Presence. This "word" of Presence is the first office of the Priesthood. They must preach Christ Jesus. To the world He will always be either a stumbling-block or foolishness—unless the world forgets Him altogether. But if the Priest can help it He must be neither forgotten nor misunderstood. What has happened in the history of the world? No sooner had Jesus gone up to the heavens and sent His Spirit down, than the Lord

began to be born to that wider world and to that countless race, every one of whom He had come to save. It was no longer a Babe found amid the straw of Bethlehem; it was no longer Jesus in the obscurity of Nazareth; neither was it a crowd upon the shore of the lake, or on the mountain side, or on the floor of the area of the Temple. Bethlehem began to be multiplied on every coast and in every city; on Nazareth the light fell, until it seemed no more a poor village in a poor country of Syria, but a city in the firmament of the universe which every eye could see. Instead of those who gathered to the Lord's word as He passed through Palestine, there were the multitudes of great capitals, the listening nations, the gathering of tribes and of tongues. And the Cross of Calvary lifted itself up and made to itself wings, and sped swiftly over land and sea, like some storm with the life-giving rain in its bosom, travelling over the hills, the forests and the plains, and changing the face of the earth. It was the voice of the Preachers which wrought this vaster coming of Christ. Peter went down into the streets with the eleven; Paul stood before judges and kings; the great Apostles went through distant countries, and laid their bones in far-off graves. The Pontiffs and Bishops of the early centuries spoke, and received the stroke that sent them as martyrs to their Master. The great Doctors laboured at those monumental works which have built up Christ and His mystical Body for all time. There were Missionaries who gathered in whole nations. There were Saints who brought Christ back

to this earth in their very person. There were long lines of Pastors in the ten thousand towns of Europe, Asia, Africa. There were preaching and writing, development, discussion, explanation, defence. As generation succeeded generation, there came on new voices, new minds, hearts still more fervent, to impress upon mankind what is the height and the depth and the length and the breadth of that Presence once revealed during those brief thirty-three years. It is the pulpit of a Catholic Church which symbolises the incessant proclamation by the Church of the great fact by which we live—the Presence on earth of Jesus Christ. What would have happened had that Chair of Truth never been set up? Or had been pulled down by kings or mobs? Or had been moved out of the Church, and erected in the halls of science or of literature? As it is, the Divinity, the redeeming power, and the very historical existence of our Lord and Saviour have been attacked in every age. Names great in research and in letters have argued and declaimed, in the early days and the later. The world to some extent has followed them. But is it not a marvel of God's Providence that the multitudes, the unlearned, the workers, who make up by far the larger part of mankind, have been on the whole so little affected in their loyalty to our Blessed Lord by all the arguments of the enemies of Christianity, from Celsus the Platonist, to the apostate Renan in our own times? What force is it that has preserved the sheepfold from these wolves? No one can mistake it. It is the Catholic preaching. I say advisedly,

preaching—not merely writing, or even lecturing, but preaching. The preacher does and ought to use with gratitude the books of learned apologists. He studies, and he ought to study, with the utmost diligence whatever can assist him to prove or to enforce the truth. But after his researches in his library, after his hours of study, after his careful and God-fearing preparation, there comes the sacred moment when he stands before his flock, in sight of the Altar of God. His hearers are not simply an audience; they are worshippers. They are not simply learners—they are Christian hearts. From their infancy, if such has been their good fortune, their minds and hearts have been familiar with the Person and prerogatives of their Lord and Redeemer. They already possess the truth; they love the truth; they welcome the teaching of the truth, for to them that truth is holy and divine. Day by day, week by week, they hear, not indeed learned argument, but Christian exposition. And when the preacher opens his lips and, bringing forth new things and old, enforces once more the story, ever new and ever old, faith glows in the hearts of his flock, and their hold upon the memory of Christ grows more and more tenacious until it becomes a part of their very being. So it is. Let the children be taught, let all as they grow up continue to attend the Catholic teaching, let men and women amid their work and their interests assiduously frequent the words of the priest, and they are secure against all that the unbeliever can bring to bear upon them. We do mourn for falls and for apostasy. And mere instruction will

not make these things impossible. For an instruction which does not inspire reverence, and kindle love, and nourish divine faith, is not really efficacious against infidelity. If it were mere cold argument that we had to face, we might meet it, on our side, by mere information. But the assault on Christianity is more than argument. What does St. Paul mean by the "fiery darts of the most wicked one" (*Eph. vi. 16*)? He means arguments pointed by malice, made hot by spite, aimed by deadly hatred. These arrows of the devil can be extinguished in no wise except by the "shield of faith"; that is, by a love, a trust and a loyalty as hot and as passionate as the diabolical envy whence they come. And such hearts are only formed by the force of Catholic preaching. The child learns this lesson, not in the Catholic school (excellent, painstaking, and most necessary as is the teaching given there), but under the roof of the house of God, before the Blessed Sacrament, from the lips of a father who wears the robes of Christ's ministry. The flock keeps its faith and reverence, not because they read tracts or articles, or pamphlets or the most excellent of books—good, useful and needful as all these things are; but on the Sunday, during that pause in the Mass when the man who is going to act in Christ's person in the dread Sacrifice stands before them, also in Christ's person, to speak of Christ and His dispensation; when no voice is heard but one; when no argument is used that does not merge in a prayer; when no exposition is uttered which does not lead to the lifting up of the immortal spirit to its

Lord and Master. For whether it be Mass or whether it be vespers—morning or evening—Sunday or weekday, here, in the Church, is the voice that renews the Presence and keeps fresh the memory of Christ. Oh, that we could multiply that ministerial voice! Oh, that faithful preachers could be found everywhere, zealous, untiring, ready to speak to the few or to the many, but always filled with zeal for the memory of Jesus Christ! “Cry out—cease not,” said the Prophet (*Isaias* lvii. 1). Yes, ye ministers to whom Jesus has entrusted His Presence, cry out with all your earnestness! Cease not for friend or for foe! Cease not for the labour of it; cease not for ill-success; cease not because your people seem to know the truth already! For preaching is God’s means. Look around and see how, without Catholic preaching, truths diminish, vital dogma drops to pieces, and the living Redeemer fades to nothing better than a shadow. Preach Christianity—complete, adequate, detailed! Preach Bethlehem, preach the Holy Family; preach the Heart which bled in Gethsemane; preach the scourge, the thorns, the nails, the Cross; preach Mary the Immaculate; preach St. Joseph; preach St. Peter and the Church of Christ; preach the Martyrs and the Saints. It is to you, Catholic preachers, that the world looks for solid and consistent teaching; and even when you speak the familiar words which reach and touch your own people, the strangers present will be brought more effectively to Christ than if you met them on platforms of discussion. How did our Lord and Master convince the Apostle

who doubted? "Behold the places of the nails," He said; "put in thy hand" where the spear went in! And we say to all men, Behold Christ! Behold His divinity and His humanity! Look at His words, His acts, His suffering! See what He has instituted, see what He has left behind Him. And as that divine Presence is reproduced to the world by the great voice of the teaching Church, discharging her offices by the ministers of the Catholic pulpit, it must be that men fall down and cry out, as Thomas did, My Lord and my God!

I have dwelt upon the word of Presence, because after that word little need be said of any other. But we spoke also of the word of Power and the word of Attraction. These follow Presence. Where Christ is there are Power and Attraction.

Observe the kinds of Power which the minister of Christ handles by the word of God. There is the power of unerring authority. There is the power of Sacramental dispensation. We do not mean that the Priest is infallible; or that everything that can be treated in the pulpit can be the object of infallibility. But the Priest of the Catholic Church has that Church behind him. He may go wrong and make mistakes. But he cannot go far wrong, both because he has the Church to consult, and because the Church is a living authority which will speak out unmistakably if any of her preachers fall into error. This power of teaching aright gives the Catholic pulpit its august authority. For to the Catholic preacher the word which he utters is most

truly the word of God. He does not invent it. He does not discover it. He does not squeeze it out of biblical texts. No! it lies before him. He comes to it and lifts it in his hand, as a man comes to a treasury of golden coins, or to a well of water that is always full. He finds it, and he distributes it. That word was formed and developed without his intervention. It lies on the face of Holy Scripture, or in the Creeds, or in the Church definitions, or in the universal belief. All the preacher has to do is to train his own faculties, to lift his heart to God, and to study how best to make men and women feel and understand. Not that this is a little thing to do! But when he has done it, then the Word itself sustains him; for it is as if he had taken up Christ in his arms, and Christ had filled his breast with inspiration.

The Sacramental Power is not exercised in the pulpit. But the Sacraments are preached in the pulpit. What is the meaning, my brethren, of the mysterious acts which go on in a Catholic Church?—in the Baptistry, in the Confessional, at the Altar? A priest acts there; he lifts his consecrated hand and utters words; and the faithful bow the head. But it is not the priest's hand or the priest's word; it is the touch and the word of Christ. Things are done there which no one but Christ could do. No one but Christ can pierce through the flesh and reach with the fingers of grace the spiritual, immortal soul. The true Church is a Sacramental Church. And that is what the preacher stands up here to tell you.

He tells you that among the many ways in which your Saviour, although ascended into Heaven, is still with you, one of the chief is the Sacramental dispensation. He tells you that the sacred word of God has, in the Sacraments, the creative, the regenerating, the renovating power which belongs to the Person of God the Son. He says that he and his fellow priests are the ministers and channels of this power. Thus Christ walks the earth still. Thus no longer within the narrow confines of Judæa and of Galilee, but in every zone and climate of the world, the sinner and the tempted can seek Him, crying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" and His hand is laid upon their head, and His word is murmured over them, filling them with the grace of His Redemption far beyond the measure of their own dispositions or preparation. And when the priest has preached thus in the pulpit, he descends to the altar or the tribunal of penance, and puts into operation the word that he has preached.

Finally, there comes the Word of Attraction. This is the word such as Jesus spoke when He said, "Come after Me and be My disciples"; the word which made men say, "Never did man speak as this man speaketh". And here it would seem as if the erring and frail men who are commissioned to preach the word of God must at length have recourse to their native gifts or talents, and must depend for success upon their learning and their eloquence. My brethren, the Catholic pulpit would soon perish if this were so. Catholic preaching is not a stranger to the

noblest efforts of oratory. A hundred names, of bygone days and of the present, start up in our thoughts when we mention the eloquence of the pulpit. And it need not be denied that natural endowments or acquired skill are helps to conviction and persuasion. But, after all, what can they do by themselves? What is it that has to be done? A human heart has to be touched, not by the visible things of this world—by human love, human misery, or human pathos—but by the things that are not seen—by the horrors of sin, the awfulness of eternity, the love of the immortal and invisible God. A human heart has to be turned from what is dear to the flesh, and made to choose that which is good for the spirit. A human heart has to be made to practise self-restraint and to follow the footsteps of the Crucified. Eloquence, learning, or delivery will do very little here; to depend on them would be like trying to put out a prairie fire with the water of your little household spring. The prerogative which I have called Attraction—or conversion, if you please—belongs to the word of Christ; because it is the prerogative of Christ Himself. All preachers know the despair which sometimes asserts itself at the bottom of their hearts, and which would mount till it suffocated them were it not that they trust to something beyond their own powers. Nay, God's servants absolutely come to distrust and be afraid of all human gifts. "My preaching," said St. Paul, "was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. ii. 4). Let a preacher only

realise this distrust, and the result is certain. The "Spirit," the "power," of which St. Paul speaks are of Christ, and the efficacy of Christ's word.

For, if you will notice, the word of God has innumerable elements of Attraction. First, there is the person of the preacher, who stands in Christ's place and is clothed with Christ's authority, and is also vowed and dedicated to a Christlike life, even if he be not, like a St. Vincent Ferrers or a Curé d'Ars, a living image of his Divine Master. It was the precept of that Master, "What ye hear in the ear, preach ye on the housetop" (*Matt. x. 27*). What will touch the people's heart is the likeness of Christ in your own heart. You listen secretly till you hear the word—till you *have* the word fast and safe—then you preach!

Next, the word of God is the word of the Love of God. If God made us, He must love us; and the demonstration of His love is the Incarnation. Therefore, to preach the love of God for man is to preach a word which is more efficacious than a two-edged sword, because it is the very word that God Himself is always speaking, speaking, speaking; and what the preacher does is to interpret it to the dull hearts of men.

Again, the word of God is the word of the Sacred Humanity, and the Passion, and all those words and acts which are united in the name of JESUS. To preach Jesus, then, is to preach a word whose efficacy does not depend on any human gifts. It is the word which is absolutely intended by God to convert the

world. The object of a preacher's study, therefore, is not to compose a sermon; but to find out how he may best put before his hearers, so as to touch their hearts, the life, the words and the Cross of Jesus.

And, once more, the attraction of the real word of God consists in the feeling that that word is true, and touches the bottom of things. As a man must have solid ground to stand on, so he must have solid truth to cling to. We live in the midst of doubts and terrors. Who am I? Whence did I come? What will become of me? And all the time this universe is rushing on and its forces are playing around, the whirl of life never ceases, and the dark gulf receives every second those that die. What can I rest on? What can I hold by? Then there is heard amid the din and the confusion the never-ceasing word of God! Clear, adequate, consistent and true, adapted to all our needs, considerate to all our infirmities, addressed with Divine skill to our very deepest heart, that saving word sounds on through the centuries. Like some bell from a church tower, it peals on amid the voices of the universe, through men's work and men's pleasure, through the storm, through the darkness. Never a lull comes in the spirit's preoccupations but that word is somehow heard. Never is a man driven to thought or reflection but it forces itself upon him. Never does he wander or lose himself but it sounds near at hand. For the word is of God; and as long as God loves the creatures He has made, so long must that word keep on resounding in their ears and appealing to their hearts. For its power lies in

this, that He Who speaks that word is He also Who made the very hearts to whom it is addressed. Those hearts He made with the capacity to take it in and the need to hold it fast; and though they may degrade themselves and do their best to destroy their very sense of hearing, nevertheless there is no moment up to their last when it cannot draw them and save them.

My brethren, did not the ancient Jewish king say a true thing when he said to the Prophet, "The word of the Lord is good"? Yes, it is good—good, like the daily bread that we eat with thankfulness; good, like the sunshine; good, like the air of heaven. A soul without the word of God sinks to degradation, or at least narrows into miserable selfishness. A people without the word of God revert to the worship of nature, with its accompaniments of sensuality, the ruthless suppression of the weak, and suicide. For us, who rejoice in the inheritance by which Christ speaketh to the end, our duty is comprised in two short phrases: to reverence it always for what it is, and to listen to it willingly.

Reverence the Word of God. Consider not the person who utters it; he is only an ambassador; behind him is the King of kings; and the substance of what he says is the eternal message delivered by God the Son made man. Reverence it. Do not discuss or pass your criticisms upon the poor channel through which it comes. That minister of the word has to answer to another Master, Who is merciful indeed to others' sins, but Who seems to find

it harder to pardon the sin of failing in duty to His own little ones. Ah ! he has to answer ! But do not you make it worse than it need be, and add your own imperfections to the heap of human guiltiness. Reverence the word, and make use of it, to deepen in yourselves that spirit which Christ demands, that spirit of the little child, that spirit of unquestioning submission and humble alacrity, without which no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And come willingly to hear it. There is a spirit abroad which leads people to run after sermons, and another which leads them to shirk sermons. Do not follow the foolish spirit which listens to a preacher merely for personal reasons ; such sermons may amuse you, but they will not save your soul. Be still more on your guard against neglecting sermons and instructions, either because you think you do not require them, or for worse reasons. My brethren, it is the spoken word which must save us, and no other. Our obligation to hear it varies with times and circumstances. But the general principle is true. I do not care how much you know ; or, on the other hand, how imperfect the preacher may be. The word is what you must have. The word may be in your mind, but it will not burn you unless you hear it from the Church, that holds Christ's office. And that word you always have, no matter who may preach. You have the priest ; you have the holy names and expressions which he uses—which, like a litany of blessed thoughts, should inflame you, by the very mention of them, to acts of faith, devotion and resolution. At the hardest, at the

worst, watch for the appearance of those divine words which relate to God and to Jesus, to heaven and to eternity, and let your heart seize upon them as they come, and lift itself up by them. I am speaking of sermons which repel you; but these cases are most exceptional. For in most sermons and instructions the reasonable mind cannot fail to find edification. And the good they will bring is the continued memory of Christ, the sense of Christ's continued presence, the strength of the Christian character, and the constant attraction to give the whole heart to God.

May these things come to this flock! May God bless and fructify the word that is spoken from this pulpit, that Christ may live in every heart of the priests who may speak and of the flock who shall hear, and that that Word Who made us and Who redeemed us may also give us Everlasting Life!

VI

GOD KNOWETH US.

“I know My sheep, and they know Me.”—*John x. 14.*

THE knowledge by which the Almighty God knows all things is called by theologians one of His divine “attributes”. Like all the attributes of God, it partakes of the character of infinitude. For God differs from men and angels not only because He is greater, and can do more, and knows more, than all men and angels together, but because His Being, power and knowledge are not measurable at all, were there a million universes to compare Him to. Without parts, without divisions, without the slightest commingling of substance, powers, or faculties, however ethereal, however spiritual, in the pure and cloudless crystal of Himself, the Divine Being exists, serene, boundless, infinite, everlasting.

It is the more needful to hold fast to this idea of God, because nearly all the foolishness that is talked about the Almighty by infidels and would-be philosophers has its source in their confusing the infinite with the enormous. The enormous multiplied ten thousand-fold could never become the infinite. They differ like matter and spirit—like the storm that sweeps over land and sea, and the thought that is

born in the heart. When men imperfectly trained in mental philosophy read the Bible, they fasten upon descriptions of God—upon His most holy Names, His wills, His acts and His commands—and, comparing these with things human, pronounce Him to be subject to change and to passion, fickle, short-sighted, or cruel. They are like those who judge the spaces and the majesty of the Atlantic Ocean by what they know of a strip of its shores. They resemble a blind man who can feel the outlines of a rose, but has no conception of its colour. Infinitude removes bounds, reconciles contradictions, and puts a barrier to human reasoning. I do not say that God's truth, God's justice, or God's love can in any degree contradict truth, justice, or love such as our own unprejudiced rational light displays to us. But in the infinite Being these things must stretch away far beyond what any created intellect can conceive; and just as a man passing from semi-darkness to dazzling light is wary at first how he pronounces upon what is around him, so human reason, be it ever so skilled in its dealings with things finite, should pause and hesitate and make very sure before it passes judgment on the works and ways of the Infinite. "The Lord," says *Isaias*, "is the everlasting God, Who hath created the ends of the earth; He shall not faint nor labour, neither is there any searching out of His wisdom" (*Isaias* xl. 27).

I do not know whether many of us are accustomed to meditate upon the "knowledge" of God. But it is a subject full of interest, most stimulating to devotion,

and most fertile in pious affections. "O Lord my God," cries out St. Augustine, "let me rejoice in the mystery of Thy unfathomable knowledge, which my sins have made me neglect and forget! . . . Thou knowest all things past, all things to come, just as a man might know some familiar song all through. O wondrous intelligence! O dread intelligence! . . . He that understandeth, let him praise Thee! He that understandeth not, let him equally praise Thee! For Thou art high, and yet Thy dwelling place is a humble heart!" (*Confess.*, xi. 31).

The truth is, that there is not one among our conceptions of God which brings Him so near us as that of His knowledge. His will may or may not help us, hold us, or punish us; the hands of His power reach out now in this direction, now in that; even His all-sustaining presence in every creature may fail, although we are aware of it, to suggest the living God. But to *know* is to hold or to contain. To know the universe is to have the universe in one's intelligence. To know the past, the present and the future, is to be a mirror in whose crystal the past, the present and the future exist in their reflections. Let us not misunderstand. Things are not in the intelligence in their gross reality. But still they are there, in a most true, real and effective way. On the other hand, the illustration of a mirror is unworthy of God's way of knowing. That God *knows*, means that God holds, possesses, cherishes, keeps within His being, all the things that He knows. He is no mirror, but a living, thinking force. The calm sea reflects the ships

with their masts and sails, the rocks on its shore, the clouds which pass over its bosom. But these things lie dead in the still water. They are nothing to the sea, which is stirred indeed by the winds or the tides, but never by anything that its waters only mirror forth. But how different it is with a living being! Like the clear water, it takes in the image of the things which offers itself. But at the same moment there is, as it were, a thrill or shock that is felt throughout that living existence, and the living intelligence re-acts in every fibre, as when one touches some delicate leaf which shrinks or stings; and the image of the outward thing becomes an idea of the mind; part of the living mind, held by the living mind, colouring the living mind, shaping the living mind, until one may almost say that the living mind is made up of the things it knows.

When we speak of God, we must not think of impressions, of colours, or of shapes; the things that He knows cannot alter Him, because He is pure spirituality itself. Yet all that has been said is virtually true of the knowledge of the Infinite God. That is, it is true that what He knows, which is everything that is or can be, is within His Being, within His living intelligence. And there is more than this. With finite beings, to know is not incompatible with periods of blank unconsciousness, when the living power seems to suspend its activity, and knowledge lies in the hidden recesses of being, like gold in the cellars of the miser, possessed but not enjoyed. Not so with the ever-living, ever-burning,

ever-shining Deity. He slumbereth not nor sleepeth. "As I have watched, saith the Lord, so will I watch" (*Jeremias xxxi. 28*). He knows, He sees, He understands. There is no night with Him, no cessation, no darkness, and no weariness; but as He is, so doth He know; and all that He hath made—the earth and the things that are in it, men in all generations, with all their thoughts and their deeds—live a second life, a transformed existence, in the bosom of God. Are we not *near to Him*? When He made man, it might seem that He sent him forth—as a father it is true—but as a father might send his child far across the seas, into some region where he is to win his bread from the sullen bosom of a new country. But if the earthly father cannot follow his son (except in thought) in his journeyings, his perils or his success, the Father in heaven never lets His child escape from His hand. For He holds him in His knowledge. Not a step, not a thought, not an emotion, but is in the supreme Intelligence as truly as it is in the universe, though as spiritually as God is spiritual. To feel what this implies, no man need go outside his experience. Whatever we can follow with the eye is, for the moment, a part of our own existence. The outward scene becomes an inward transformation. Our being passes from idea to idea, from emotion to emotion, as the things pass before our view. The things that we see, and even the things that we remember, recalling them out of the mysterious folds of the imagination, are the things on which our very inmost life is nourished. Interest, excitement,

instruction, recreation—sometimes passion and tempest—joy, sorrow, hope, fear, love and hate—all the tissue and substance of our life is woven out of what we come to see, to hear, to know. And in God, although He is impassible, unchangeable, absolutely spiritual, nevertheless in God there is knowledge of us and of all things, and if knowledge, then also there is, though human language has no adequate word to convey it, a conscious hold, a recognition of, an unspeakable vital response to, every detail of the universe of mind and things. “Say not,” cries Ecclesiasticus, “I shall be hidden from God, and who shall remember me from on high? . . . Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens, the deep and all the earth and the things that are in them, shall be moved in His sight” (*Ecclus.* xvi. 16);—shall be moved; that is, are aware, feel, know that He knows them, that He sees them; so vital, so efficacious is God’s knowledge of things. Well might the Psalmist cry out, “O Lord, Thou art near; and all Thy ways are truth” (*Ps.* cxviii. 151).

For this “nearness” of God to men and to this universe, by knowledge, leads us one step further in the conception of Him Who is our Father and our Friend. How is it that God knows everything—every minutest detail of all that exists? Because *before* anything could exist it must have been present to the mind of God. “For all things,” saith God’s herald in the Old Testament, “all things were known to the Lord God before they were created; so also after they were perfected He beholdeth all things”

(*Eccclus.* xxiii. 29). How solemn a thought it is, to consider these two universes—the universe that God has caused to be, and the universe that answers to it in the intelligence of God! We may have seen, on a calm clear night in winter, the whole heavens, with every particular star, reflected on the broad surface of a tranquil lake. But, with Almighty God, what seems to our limited thought to be the reflection is really the cause of the whole existing scene. It is as if, at some time far gone by, from the bosom of the deep there had ascended the blue firmament and all the orbs of heaven. This were a feeble type of creation. How truly we all belong to God! O infinite Intelligence! It is to Him we owe our inmost being. And when we, with our own created minds, reason about the things that are; when we search for principles; when the intellectual power that we have kindles and flames at the beautiful laws and relations that we can read in the universe; when we rejoice in what we call truth, and justice, and goodness, and beauty;—all this has issued from the abyss of the great God. What we call truth and justice here below is nothing but some conformity, some correspondence, with His being. What we call goodness or beauty is only some feeble reflection of the infinite God, Who has deigned to reveal Himself, now in one degree, now in another, in the things that He has made. Lift up your hearts, all you who scrutinise the things that are!—all you who search and study! Never stop short at the earth, or even at the sky. No truth is significant unless it discovers to you some vestige of

the Creator. No science is complete unless it opens a door in the heavens. No investigation is finished until the visible and the tangible has somehow or other awakened an echo in the spiritual soul, and caused the human spirit to reach out beyond time and space, in an effort, never wholly successful yet always noble and fruitful, to grasp the infinite and the everlasting.

Thus God knows all things, future as well as past and present, because He is the efficient cause of all, and from Him they have whatever they are or have.

This grand and dominating Christian thought becomes pregnant with an overwhelming meaning when we apply it to the rational creation.

A human being is the universe in little. He is so complex, so manifold in his relations, he touches so many departments of life and activity, that a lifetime is not sufficiently long for one man to learn another, neither is it sufficiently long for any human being to develop one-tenth part of the possibilities that lie within his being. Yet God knows every man, and every man through and through, from his beginning onwards, even into that dark future which no created eye can penetrate. God knows your body and your soul; your powers, your capacity, your character; the play of your endowments, the set of your will, the network of your nerves. God has a book in which every thought, word and deed is set down. Nay! no book! But it is all there. He knows your motives in every step, which even your own thought is unable to analyse. He knows your halting and

fear, your achievements, which the world often calls failures, your miserable breakdowns, which your purblind fellow mortals often call success. Moreover, He has in His knowledge all that you will do, or will suffer, to the end; and this in spite of your having the prerogative of free-will; for, in some mysterious way, which we cannot now discuss, your free-will is compatible with God's foreknowledge.

All this is certain, and known to all.

But there is something more. We have seen that God's knowledge of things outside of Himself cannot modify or colour His wholly spiritual being. Yet now we have to say something that seems to contradict this elementary fact of divine philosophy. There is no real contradiction. But it is true, all the same, that God's knowledge of His creature man is a knowledge which draws God's heart with it. Even if He had not Himself declared this, we could not doubt it. But what do these words mean: "Behold, O Lord, Thou knowest all things new and old; Thou hast formed me, and put Thy hand upon me" (*Ps. cxxxviii. 5*)? What does the hand of God mean but God's fatherly Providence? and what moves the hand but the heart? For to speak here of man alone, God sees before Him a creature whom He has endowed with some kind of likeness to Himself; with a purpose, and a knowledge of that purpose, and a power of choice. Here is a creature unlike every other creature! Here is a creature not only capable of acting and living for a purpose, but capable of turning its marvellous faculties on God Himself; of

meeting God ; of reciprocating the look of God, the action of God ; of finding a refuge in the bosom of God ; and in the meantime of longing for God. God could not have created anything without a settled purpose ; all creation feels His government. But between God and His creature man, there must be more than government, more than cold and naked purpose, more than the action of one who has set nature to work in her mighty grooves. There must be that kind of intercommunion which can only exist between mind and mind (though one mind is the Infinite) ; between absolute intelligence and reason, however short-sighted ; between the supreme Will and the will of a rational though limited nature ; between One Who knows and those who can know back ; between the Creator and those who can never be finally happy unless they use their intelligence on the Creator Himself.

Here, then, we have the source and root of the Providence of Almighty God ; that is to say, of His supreme knowledge looked at as the purpose of the Divine mind, to order all things for the sake of those who can know Him and love Him.

I declare to you, my brethren, that that is God's purpose. I refer you to the Scriptures, to the Doctors, to the Saints, to your own reason. I do not mind, and you need not mind, that there are difficulties. A troubled heart may say, How can I be sure that my God wills to save me, when I know that it is not all men who are saved ? when He permits evil, and sin, and damnation ? My brethren, God could not have

created a rational creature without free-will. To have made sin impossible would have made the kind of creature that you are, that I am, impossible. This being so, I am not required to answer objections in detail. Created rational nature is a fact. God is a fact. No consequences of these two facts can be wrong, or unjust, or to be repudiated. If a man has to make a sword, and he has no material but bronze, it is not to be imputed to him that the sword so made bends, or shows dints when it is used. God, then, knows why He made me; He knows what I am; He knows what things, what circumstances, what combination, will lead me to my end and purpose; and He stretches out His hand. "He will have all men to be saved," says St. Paul (1 *Tim.* ii. 4). "Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things that Thou hast made" (*Wisdom* xi. 25). What "love" is this? What "will" is this? It is no barren desire—no indifferent tolerance. It is a will filled with knowledge and appreciation. Or, rather, it is, first, the knowledge of God streaming out in action, like the heat of the sun, that must spread wherever there is anything to warm and to cherish. That blessed Knowledge and Providence has arranged from all eternity the birth of a man, his career and his death. It chose the best hour for him to appear in the world; it surrounded him with the best means and circumstances; it provided against temptations; it numbered his years; it fixed the hour and the circumstances of his death. Do you believe this? Do you believe that God's Providence has done for you what is best? I will

not say absolutely the best that is conceivable,—that may not be; but the best that could be without working constant miracles; the best that could be without the course of creation being interrupted; the best that could be for a being who comes in the course of nature and according to laws once for all laid down. I will admit these limitations; but for our present purpose they are of no consequence whatever. God's Providence has done what is best for you, and is doing what is best for you. There is only one thing that can spoil Providence, and turn the best into what is not the best, but into what is dangerous; that is, your own freedom of choice. If you do not correspond, you thwart Providence. You can do that. It is in your power. Alas! we have all done it! But what is certain on grounds of philosophy and revelation is, that your birth, life and death are, if not spoilt by your own sin, so perfectly adapted to save you, that no element is wanting in that perfect adaptation, and nothing, therefore, could be better. For He wills all men to be saved. And that will is the will of One Who knows and reckons every impulse of your being and every step of your existence.

The effect, upon the spiritual life of a man, of a living belief in God's loving knowledge of all that concerns us, must be stimulating in the highest degree. It was this that gave the ancient Saints that entire dependence on God which the Holy Scripture calls "walking in His sight". It is this which dictates our daily prayer, given to us by Jesus Christ, "Thy will be done"—the will of One Who knows what is

best for His children. It is this which has created in all the Saints that spirit which is their most marked characteristic—I mean their affectionate trust in God; trust in His knowledge, in His solicitude, in His guidance, in His providence, and in His gracious help. And it is not too much to say that it is the opposite of this spirit, or the want of it, which keeps so many good people from advancing in divine charity and perfection. In spite of revelation, in spite of the Incarnation, which is the greatest revelation of all; in spite of one's reason and the clear consequences which follow from the very idea of God; in spite of prophet and psalmist and preacher and saint,—these narrow and cold hearts of ours insist on looking on God only as a Creator, a Master, a Judge, and an Avenger. Reason with them and they will admit you are right—that God must always be working for our good; but as they drift back from religious reflection into the stream of ordinary human thought, they again fall under the spell of hesitation and distrust; and the enemy of our salvation never fostered a more pestilent or destructive heresy than the opinion—furtive, half-formed, lurking in the dark corners of a Christian heart—which denies God's solicitude for our souls.

I ask you to call to mind that most striking passage in *Isaias*, “I have made you, and I will bear, I will carry, I will save” (*Is.* xlv. 4). What does He promise to bear? Whom to carry? How to save? The answer is, that God knows three things—our weakness, our sufferings, and our sins. “He knoweth our

frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (*Ps.* cii. 14). He will bear with our weakness; He will carry us in our troubles; and He will save us, sinners as we are.

Consider how intimately God knows your weakness. It is as if a man held the hand of a little child; he feels the tender fingers, he is conscious of the contraction of the feeble muscles, he experiences the impotence, the clinging, the simple abandonment of the creature by his side. A slight shock would throw it to the ground, a small obstacle would cause tears and despair, the weakest of enemies would terrify it. A few paces exhaust its strength; the heat and the cold wither it up; without tender care and food its little life would die out like the light dies off the water when clouds gather. Our Father in Heaven holds us, not by the hand, but by His Being, which is in a certain kind of contact with all the springs of our own being—a contact which is not mere contact, but knowledge; and consequently, if we may use the phrase in speaking of God, feeling or emotion. "Can a woman forget her infant?—and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee" (*Isaias* xlix. 15). This means that, however spiritualised may be the feelings we attribute to the absolutely spiritual God, yet, as far as we are concerned, it is just as if He had the very feelings of a mother—and of more than a mother. He knows our ignorance, our obtuseness, our incapacity for attaining to what is spiritual. He knows our occupation and our distraction. He knows how the things

round about arouse our curiosity and fill our thoughts to the exclusion of Himself. He knows our sluggishness, the strength of passion, the moving power of pride. If these things are so—and they are—how can He not know them? And if He knows them, will He despise the child at His side? Will He fling you off and leave you to perish? Will He even be impatient and dislike you for these things? The heart recoils in horror from the idea. Some men or women might so act with a little child; but are you to go to men and women of that character to find an analogy to describe your heavenly Father, Who is perfect? And yet some of us seem to draw our practical idea of God from sources like this!

Again, He knows our sufferings. He knows that some men and women have to suffer much, some less, but all something. He knows our anxieties, our griefs, our discouragements, our fears, our humiliations. He is ready to carry us; as His Prophet says, "In the wilderness the Lord thy God hath carried thee, as a man is wont to carry his little son" (*Deut. i. 31*). We are not left to suffer unregarded and alone. There are men and women who could see an ailing fellow creature toil along a dusty road, footsore, hungry, thirsty, and not offer help. But reason revolts at finding in these human beings a picture of God. "Ephraim is an honourable son to Me, saith the Lord; he is a tender child; . . . I will always remember him; my bowels are troubled for him, pitying I will pity him, saith the Lord" (*Jer. xxxi. 20*). He has taken the smart out of every pain. Let a man

turn to Him ; let him lovingly accept his suffering. For God sees far beyond the present hour of pain, which to the sufferer seems so hard, so unjust, so inexplicable. God sees the golden harvest of pain in the ages of eternity. If we only believed, hearkened to Him, turned to Him, suffering would still indeed be suffering, but, oh ! how easy to bear, how light, how full of joy ! It is absolutely certain that the Scriptural revelation of God's pity and compassion means at least His readiness, if men would not harden their hearts, to alleviate all the hardships of life and of the earth, by faith and hope and love.

And finally, in spite of sin, He will save us. Every man is bound to believe this in his own case. It is no matter that all are not saved. It is certain that if you and I are not saved, it will be a thousand and a thousand times our own fault. This is a primary, an elementary truth. Were it otherwise, God would be no God. Therefore, all difficulties or obscurities connected with it, even if *we* cannot explain them, are capable of explanation.

Hope is a part of our Faith. Faith and reason show us a God Who knows our sins. That is true. How well He knows them ! "Say not, I shall be hidden from God, and who shall remember me from on high ?" (*Ecclus.* xvi. 16). And when He looks upon His creature and His child, He looks upon one who is wounded and in danger, and who is even so perverse as to refuse to be healed. What would a father do then ? What would a mother do ? For God is more than father or mother. We are speaking

of those who have at least some wish to save their souls. There are human beings who are without God, as St. Paul says; that is, who do not use their faculties either to attend to God or to find out about Him. And there are the contemptuous and the hardened. Even these God saves in thousands, but only by breaking down their obtuseness and hardness. But I am speaking of you and of me, who have sins, and plenty, and who are sluggish and indifferent and selfish and sensual; yet who, at our best, and at least every now and then, do desire to love God and belong to Him; who, at our best, and at least at intervals, do bestir ourselves to take advantage of those sacramental means which He has established as fountains of His salvation. I say we have every right to hope—nay, to be secure. Not to be presumptuous; not to look forward to cheating God. But to be secure that the little element of fervour that is alive in us will be fostered by God's mercy into a flame—a great flame, it may be, some day. For such as we are the ones whose sins He has pity on. To us are all the promises—promises to “blot out our iniquities,” to “turn away His wrath,” to “have mercy,” to “heal,” to “redeem,” to “deliver from death,” to “remember our sins no more”. For we are of those of whom He has caused it to be written, “Thou sparest all because they are Thine, O Lord, Who lovest souls” (*Wisdom xi. 27*). O Lord, Who lovest souls! Divine and consoling words, that should fill with hope the poor sinner who is sincere and earnest in his wish to give his heart to God.

To return to where we began. God is very near us. He has us, and all our living activity, in the responsive grasp of His never-clouded intelligence. He looketh on us evermore. O that look of God, the root and cause of things, reaching from end to end, penetrating, burning, wrapping us round, overwhelming the world as the deep waters surround and press upon the living creatures that are in them! From that look there is no escape. You may flee to the heights or plunge in the depths, you cannot find a foothold in all existence that is beyond its reach. But why should any child of God want to hide himself from that knowledge of the Omnipotent which is his life, his light and his salvation? Look upon me, O my Father! How sweet to me is the thought that Thou art near! Purify my heart from all doubt of Thy tender Providence, from all mistrust of Thy infinite love, that as Thou knowest me from eternity, so I may at length begin to know Thee!

VII.

CHRIST KNOWETH US.

“I know Mine, and Mine know Me.”—*John x. 14.*

THAT God knows all things is as certain as that He exists. That He knows men and women, His rational creatures, in all their thoughts and deeds; and that He knows them in order to draw them to Himself—these things are also certain.

But there are truths which, although they are certain, yet at times and seasons are obscured or forgotten. There are very few truths connected with the being of God which the limited and unsteady intelligence of men cannot and does not lose sight of. God is high and most spiritual; and man's ways and instruments are all affected by earth and matter. Therefore, God's loving Providence is capable of being doubted, overlooked, forgotten. And men have hesitated about it. Learned philosophers have taught that God does not care for things below; and the tendency of the view of God which the most accepted modern science takes, is to put up barriers and walls between us and God, to multiply veils, to shut doors, so that it may appear that there is no heavenly Father, but only an unknown force in some far-away seclusion, which neither knows us, nor helps us, nor heeds us.

It was to make this most fatal error impossible—or at least to secure the poor and simple millions of our race from being carried away by it—that God adopted that stupendous plan which is called the Incarnation. For our salvation it was essential, among other things, that we should firmly believe in our heavenly Father's loving knowledge of us and in His absolute acquaintance with and sympathy in all our ills and deficiencies. This most precious belief is now firm and secure. For we have Jesus Christ our Saviour—His coming, His mission, His life and His teaching. "I know Mine," says our Lord, in the Gospel of the Sunday of the Good Shepherd, "and Mine know Me." These words are true of the Everlasting God, even had He never descended to this earth and taken to Himself our human nature. They are not more true of Jesus Christ our Saviour—because they could not be more true. But when spoken by the mouth of Him Who came in order that all of us might know God the better, they have a most touching and emphatic message for our hearts.

For why is He on earth at all? Why has He gone through that overpowering series of wonders which we know of, and made it true to say that a certain man, with the Name of Jesus, Who was born at Bethlehem, whose Mother was called Mary, is nothing less than the only, infinite God? Why has He made certain places of the world the habitation of the Eternal—Bethlehem His cradle, Nazareth His home, Egypt His exile, Jerusalem the scene of His Passion? Why have we a certain history, called the Gospel, in

which word after word, phrase after phrase, sentence after sentence, is the literal word of God Almighty, uttered by no other lips than the Almighty's own? Because it was necessary to make men see and feel that God cared for them. Because the silence of eternity, broken as it had been by communications which had pierced the firmament above men's heads as swift meteors do sometimes, was to be dispersed once for all by a great opening of doors, a lifting up of everlasting gates, and a proclamation that the ends of the world should be forced to hear. No one seeks out a man for whom he does not care. No one disturbs settled order and breaks through rooted laws unless he has something vividly in his mind and desperately at heart. If you believe that Jesus Christ is God, you believe that your God is ready to do for you more than any friend or father or mother could ever have conceived the idea of doing for a child or a friend; you believe that He has you in His mind in some transcendent way; you believe that His supreme intelligence, and His absolute overpowering will, and His providence and His action, are filled and pervaded with the concerns of men—with the fate of men, the wants and requirements of men, the life of men, and the death of men. Otherwise Jesus of Nazareth would never have been seen under the skies of Syria, and no such Name would ever have lighted up the annals of the world.

“I know Mine, and Mine know Me.” This is true of God's knowledge as God, although we can only dimly understand how it is true. But since the

Incarnation there is a new sense to these words. We believe that our Lord had a true human nature. He could feel pain and sorrow and affection. And these things He did feel—pain such as the most exquisitely formed humanity could feel, sorrow such as the clearest insight and the most sensitive heart could experience, and love at once the purest and the most intense, for all the beings whose Brother He had become.

Now, therefore, when I look at my own life and ask myself, as at times the heart does ask, if any one cares for me or sympathises with me, I can comfort and strengthen myself in a way that no human invention could ever have brought to pass. For I can say, not only that God knows my lot and my trouble, but that God feels for me! If my history has had some dark places, there were dark places in the history of my Lord and Saviour. If my spirit has been weighed down by trouble, so has His. If my nerves have throbbed with pain, so have His. If my heart has suffered anguish, so has His. If I have had to face the up-hill work of life, to force myself, to hold myself in, to struggle on against temptation—Jesus has felt such things. Not that He has been tempted, as we are sometimes, by the rising of rebellious passions. But the spiritual effect of trial and temptation He has deigned to feel. Although the shadow of sin never came near Him, yet the anguishes and repugnances of human nature were known to Him. Therefore not only does He know, but He feels with us. If we ask our own experience, we observe

how much more strongly we feel for others in those things which we ourselves have passed through. If a man has had a hard fight in his own younger days, he is not much of a man if he does not feel for the youth that he sees going through the same struggle. Those who have suffered hunger and want know what it is when they meet with the poor and the destitute. Those who have lost husband, or wife, or child, have a very ready pity for others who are similarly tried and visited. You may know things and you may reason on them, but nothing stirs your heart like personal experience; nothing teaches you like the stings and the half-healed scars of adversity; nothing opens the heart and the affections to interest, to kindness, and to active charity, so effectually as the memory of your own sufferings and sorrows. But with Jesus, how was all this intensified! A pure heart, unclouded by the passion which makes men so selfish; a heart not torn with ambitions, but serene and holy; a heart which was made and formed to compassionate sinful men—what sympathy, what holy human feeling, would not stir it to its beauteous depths when He saw, in the lives of men, the clouds coming down which had come upon Himself, the pain which He Himself had felt, and the sorrows—even though they were far lighter than His own—which all men must taste in their turn! The briefest consideration of this subject forces the mind to see how deeply, how intimately, our Blessed Lord must know every one of us. That our actions and inmost thoughts are no secret to Him, we knew. That He saw us before we

existed, we knew. That He counts all our steps, we knew. That all the dates and issues of our destiny are in His intelligence, we knew. But that He could enter with sympathy into all these vicissitudes of humanity which result from the heats and chills, the ebb and flow, the light and shade, of our very mortality—this we never could have known, or expected, or looked for, had not the Son of God been revealed. “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us” (1 *John* iii. 1).

Thus, just as our Heavenly Father is ever near to us by that undimmed look with which He follows in mercy and compassion all our interior and exterior life, so Jesus Christ Whom He has sent, with sympathetic emotion and answering Heart, has His ministering and healing Hand upon us in all our steps and all our fortunes. There is no aspect of the Incarnation more fertile in courage and confidence to men than the thought of the fellow-feeling of Him Who came to seek us and to save us.

But we must not conceal from ourselves that there is another side to this insight and compassion of Christ. His knowledge of us is our hope and comfort. But have we ever considered what is the cost of that knowledge to Himself? Remember that human concerns—the deeds, the weaknesses, the sins of men—being written in His human intelligence, must needs affect His human nature. For His human nature is not like His Divine—absolutely out of the reach of every change, vicissitude, or emotion. God knows all things as God; and the most violent displays of the

forces of matter or the turmoils of mind, which seem so fiery and so awe-inspiring here below, move Him (as *we* understand the word) no more than the light spray of a summer sea moves the black rock above it. But not so with the Sacred Humanity. That Humanity is a true humanity. It is assumed by the Godhead, but remains absolutely distinct, on its own basis, with its own intelligence, will, imagination, senses and feelings. Have you ever once thought what must be the effect of the turbulent river of human history when it dashes itself ceaselessly upon a mind and heart which are as human as your own? Have you thought of the shock—the pain—the burthen? To know all the sufferings, all the sorrows, of all the generations! To know (what was far worse) all the sins of men, their ingratitude, their indifference! To know the little use, in so many instances, of all that He Himself had done—to see in every part of the earth the struggle of the light with the darkness, the wide spaces which continued in shadow so long after the Orient had risen; to foresee the doom of those whom He had loved, the loss of the souls for which He had died! To have such a panorama always before the sight! to be unable to shut it out, except by an exertion of His power which He was not to make! To distinguish with clear and painful definition every detail, to endure the anguish of a fresh rejection in every single sin of each individual human soul! Oh! knowledge of Jesus Christ! Was His very Cross itself a heavier weight to carry? Were the scourges, the thorns and the nails any harder to endure?

Thus our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He says that He knows His own, speaks of a knowledge which is coloured by the experiences of His own heart and life—of knowledge which has pierced and penetrated into the inmost recesses of His human nature, moving Him to every feeling, except sin or passion, of which a grand and pure humanity is capable.

And let us observe for our further consolation, and for that hopefulness and trust which of all Christian virtues lead most directly to the perfection of divine charity, that our Lord takes the greatest pains to make our hard hearts feel that His knowledge is concerned with each and every individual soul. To Christ you are not a mere numbered unit—you are what your own make, your own history, constitute you. To your Saviour you are as if no other human creature lived; He would have taken flesh for you alone; He would have been crucified for you alone; He would have opened His fountains and planned His graces for you alone. There is no more striking name or designation in all Holy Scripture which He has given Himself than that of the Good Shepherd; and we may also say that there is none to which He seems to cling so fondly. In speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd we cannot doubt that He intended His hearers to be reminded of one of the sweetest of the Psalms of David—the 22nd. That is, the Psalm of the Good Shepherd; and already, in the old Covenant, before Bethlehem, Nazareth, or Calvary had come to pass, the divine solicitude of the eternal God was calling upon His creatures to look up to Him as one

whose dealings with them could best be illustrated by that touching and romantic figure, the shepherd of the East. In that Psalm, which begins "The Lord is my Shepherd" (or, in our present version, "The Lord ruleth me"), "and I shall want for nothing," we are reminded in explicit terms of the "place of pasture" and of the "water," both of which, in those countries, implied special and careful solicitude, any green thing being scarce and every drop of water precious; and we have the "rod" and the "staff"—the shepherd's crook of individual vigilance. And the conclusion—or the application of the illustration—is that God's mercy will follow me—me, individually—all the days of my life. Our Blessed Lord, as you will remember, almost paraphrases this Psalm. He speaks of "His own" as a flock of sheep that are in His holy keeping. Do not let the word "flock" seem to signify any want of individual solicitude. No one who knew the shepherd of the East could have felt that for one instant. He knows every one of his sheep. Each of them knows his voice. He does not drive them huddled before him. They follow him, each of them drawn, each of them attached to him. He finds them water and pasture. He fences the fold against the wolf and the robber. And when one strays—even one—he follows it with devoted toil until he finds it, and carries it home on his shoulders.

These and similar reflections on the Incarnation of our Lord and on His own words and parables should leave upon our minds the idea of an ever-present Friend, powerful, wise and kind, intimately acquainted

with every fibre of our being, whose fixed and dearest purpose is to save us. Is this a picture which is useful for the world or not? There can be no hesitation about the answer. It is the picture which our Saviour Himself paints of Himself, and that is decisive. I may be told that there are some traits of that Master and Redeemer left out. I do not deny it. He is more than the Good Shepherd. He is also King and Lord, Judge and Avenger. This also we have from Himself. And it is quite certain that multitudes of human creatures care so little for His loving solicitude that it would be a good thing for them if they could be terrified by His justice and His power. But I doubt whether any one ever is, or has been, drawn to Jesus Christ merely by the thought of His judgments. There are those whom that thought makes to enter into themselves and to reflect. There are those whom it startles or even terrifies at one time or other of their lives, and thus gives divine grace its opportunity. But unless sorrow and hope and love succeed, fear is as transient as the white frost on an April morning. And a life lived chiefly under the influence of God's anger and the dread of future retribution, would hardly rise above superstition, and would probably, sooner or later, fall to pieces in reckless sin.

Nevertheless, in order to live up to this conception of our Lord and Saviour, and to absorb into our own spiritual being all the warmth, all the light, all the fertile power, of that source of all salvation, there must be on our side a certain familiarity with Him

which is, unhappily, by no means so common as it should be. If it is a most happy truth that He "knows" us, it should also be true of us that we "know" Him. There are various divisions among the men and women who know not Christ. There are the unbelievers, some of whom are so by their own fault, others (as far as we can see) without any fault; there are the worldly, the carnal, and the self-satisfied, who are entirely taken up with this present life, and altogether disregard religion; then, again, there are those who believe in Christ, but who have false, or at least inadequate, ideas of His Person, His atonement, and the sacramental dispensation which carries on His work into every nook and corner of the universe and of the human heart. Finally, there are those whose faith is right and whose will is in the right direction, but who, through indifference and worldliness, aggravated by the want of teaching, treat Jesus Christ as a stranger. They treat Him with respect; nay, they treat Him at intervals as they ought to do—with adoration and sorrow and love. But the tenor of their lives is outside of any real conviction that He is so fast and firm a friend as He is. It is only of these last that I want to speak.

There is no better means of knowing any one or any thing than that we should *use our eyes*. We have eyes, faculties, powers, by which it is possible to make ourselves familiar with the Lord and Saviour Who is to save us. It is one of His marks or characters that He is set before us—that He is in sight of us. We have not to seek Him in secret places, or to travel far

in order to find Him. The world's annals are full of Him. There is not one of us who is not brought up in company with the Presence of Christ. The heathen might have to look for Him, but not we. There is no book in the world so familiar as the Gospels. There is no child in a Christian land who does not hear, from parent, or pastor, or teacher, of Jesus Christ Who died on the Cross. He has a Name which is not only above all names, but is better known than any other name. The places of His history—Judæa and Galilee, Jerusalem and Capharnaum, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Calvary—are not only part of our very speech, but are as full of holy associations as the rose or the violet is full of the sweet odour which it pours around. It is no small grace that the Name and history of Jesus Christ are so absolutely a part of our human inheritance, so that by our very birth we enter into the knowledge of our Saviour.

Then let us use our eyes! We have to use them, not on an earthly scene—not on the mountains, the fields, or the sea—but on ideas and truths. Yet this world of ideas is not all ideas—it is not abstract, or complex, or dry, or difficult—but it is a Person and a story. We live in the midst of it, just as one might live in some beautiful valley or on some noble mountain-side of the earth's surface. But knowledge is not perfected by mere neighbourhood. Knowledge means the transference of an outside surrounding to our own vital being. It is more even than the imprint of the thing upon our organ of sight. You may see in the eye of the dead the finished picture of the external

scene ; but there is no response, no vital reaction, no absorption into the mysterious tissues and powers which make up sense and mind. To know, means to be affected, altered, coloured, perhaps moved, disturbed ; perhaps infected as with a pestilence, perhaps purified as with the ether of the spheres, or lifted up as by the inebriation of the true, the beautiful and the good. But no sluggard can ever know, in the full and adequate sense of the term—not even the things of the earth. To be awake, to be alert, to be ready, to put pressure on the springs of energy—these are conditions without which no man can know either person or thing, earth or sky, science or industry. When the leader of the Hebrew host was not far from the promised land the Lord said to him, “Go up to the top of Phasga, and cast thy eyes round about to the west and to the north and to the south and to the east, and look at it” (*Deut.* iii. 27). So a man must use his eyes to take in the Kingdom of God, and the Person of Jesus, Who is its King, its life and its glory. In the days of the great Prophets of Israel the supernatural revelation of God surrounded the city of Sion like her own hills ; yet does Isaias cry out unceasingly, “Give ear and attend” ; and to Jeremias the command came, “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem”—so vital is it that, in the midst of our graces, the faculties of our being should be roused to attend to them. When the symbolic serpent was set up in the desert to heal the murmurers of the venom of their fiery bites, the command was that all the sufferers should “look” : there was no healing from its presence

unless they looked. And when the Prophet Zacharias foresees in a vision Him Whom that serpent prefigured exalted upon the Cross, what is his word, but “ they shall look on Me Whom they have pierced ” (*Zach. xii. 12*) ?

It is impossible, then, that any Christian of us all can “ know ” Christ as He should be known unless he is well instructed, unless he keeps up this instruction throughout his life, unless he uses a good many minutes of his life to think, and unless he feels that in his own heart and mind the idea of Christ is present and in possession as an honoured guest who occupies the best part of the house. Hence it is essential to teach the young from their earliest years ; and not merely to instruct them in terms, formulas and sentences, but to touch their human feeling at the very foot of the altar, that what is poured out to them they may absorb into their intelligence, their imagination and their love. Hence a Christian who works and reads and thinks, day by day, year by year, but gives no time to work out Christ, to study the acts, words and institutions of Christ, to read about faith and sacraments, and to follow the words of qualified instructors, lives with his eyes shut to his Saviour, and cannot possibly be said to “ know ” Him. People tell you in these days that religion is only conduct. That is wrong, because religion is adoration, sorrow for sin, and service of God ; but if religion were nothing more than conduct, you could not be religious without continuous thought and solid instruction ; for what will control your conduct except the

life, the example and the grace of Christ? and no man who gives his mental faculties to earthly things alone can be adequately possessed by the knowledge of Christ. For Christ and His religion is not a formula, a spell, or a charm contained in one word or in a score of words; but it is a world, a universe, which might be made to seize hold of our being and our faculties just as the starry heavens with their infinite depths and spaces have been known to fill and fascinate the intelligence of a great astronomer. Is there any aspect of human folly—childishness, as Holy Scripture calls it—so disheartening as our indifference to knowing who and what is our Lord and Redeemer? All the time that He is following us step by step in our foolish, spoilt lives—all the time that His patient insight is bearing with us, and His inventive solicitude devising new means for our sanctification—all the time that He is studying us (if the word may be used) with a minuteness of mercy and sympathy possible only to Himself—we care to know Him little more than if He were a stranger. If the Psalmist, in those early days, before the Name of Jesus was known on earth, could pour himself out, as he does in the 118th Psalm, when he sings of the duty and the happiness of “meditating day and night on the law of the Lord,” what kind of a psalm might be written now on the sweetness of learning to know the Saviour of men? This the Saints have understood. This we—every one of us—are called upon to understand, and, with St. Paul, to learn to “look upon Jesus”.

And, in order that every Christian heart may the

more devotedly dedicate its faculties to this divine meditation, let me show you how you can awaken yourselves to attention, and arrest that weak and wandering spiritual sense, which is all you have to depend upon. If a man will not look attentively, he will sometimes follow. If he will not study with his heart, he will perhaps move his body. If we have a difficulty in learning our religion and our Redeemer, we can at least go after Him. There were those, in the days of His mortality, who went out of their way to find Him, to listen to Him, to keep in His company; and some of these found themselves at last standing over against His Cross on Calvary. Can we thus follow Him, even now that He has gone away?

You will remember a very striking passage in St. Paul, in which he says, "You are the Body of Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 27)—and, indeed, many similar passages, in which he insists upon a fact—which is often enough stated but very incompletely acted upon—that the Church is the Body of Christ. In other words, the faithful, as a body, represent—not, of course, the dead body—but the living Christ, with all His powers, prerogatives, and graces on the one hand, and all His rights to our service and our ministrations on the other. Thus the individual Christian, longing to know Christ, can follow Him, and that in two ways. First, there is the visible Church, with its voice, its ministry, its sacrifice, its sacraments, and its various attributes. Let a man keep close to the visible Church, and he has a good chance of keeping close to Christ, and of coming to know Him better and better. For the

Church teaches and nourishes and stimulates. As a humble follower of Jesus in Judæa or Galilee was instructed, and perhaps healed, or again fed, and benefited in soul and body, so this magnificent organisation of the risen Christ (for He rose again for our justification) stands visible and tangible in this visible and tangible world, and, in the power of Christ, draws men, heals men, feeds men. To know the Church, therefore, is in a great measure to know Christ. For it is to know the power, the mercy, the sweetness, and the patience of Christ; it is to see Him still working; it is to feel Him near, and to be penetrated with the reality of His solicitude—His undiminished solicitude—for the souls He has redeemed. There is not a page of the Catholic Liturgy which does not express some trait of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; not a day among her festivals which does not recall what He has done or said; not a Sacrament which is not as it were the very touch of His hand. Every Church where the Christian stands is Calvary repeated. And the ministers of the Church, with their character and office, weak men as they are, keep before men's sight a teaching and a ministration which must be Christ's own, or else the New Testament is a fable, and the Mediator of the New Testament Himself has misled us. Every man who would know the Good Shepherd should find his way to the door of the sheepfold.

The body of Christ can also be ministered to. As Christ in men speaks and acts in power, so in men He asks for compassion and service. To do anything

for the suffering and the poor is to do it to Himself; and those who minister to their fellow-creatures learn more effectually to know Christ. It is not difficult to see how. What we most require in order to know Christ is, not preaching or proving Christ, but taking Him into our intelligence and heart. For this there is nothing so advantageous as a little warmth, a little pity, a little self-sacrifice. Even the influence of the sacred Gospel has slight influence upon these hearts of ours till they thaw. A man who seeks out Christ in His members thus disposes his heart to know Him. He disposes his heart to kindness, to goodness, to do what is right, to disregard self. When a man has reached that point, Jesus is not far off. These things are too like Himself not to lead to His recognition. But, what is much more, these exercises of charity, if once the heart does turn anxiously to Christ (as it is very sure to do), furnish the heart with intuitions which effectually teach us what our Blessed Lord is. This service of the poor is a revelation to us. If I find myself comforted by my own charity and sacrifice—if I find these things good, holy, lovely, worthy of the best manhood—what must the heart of Jesus be? Nay, this is not cold reasoning or stiff inference. It is a kind of immediate knowledge. Christ feels to me as I feel at my best towards the poor and the suffering. An intuition like that is worth a thousand pages of exhortation; not to say that all exhortation and all teaching, to those who have had this experience, take a new light and a new colour; so that words which before would have been passed unheeded by, now

strike and burn. "Behold," says St. Gregory, speaking of the incident on the way to Emmaus, "Christ was not known when He spoke, but when He was ministered to He discovered Himself."

Let us, in our lowliness, begin to put in practice every means to know God better, and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. Remembering how intimately, how absolutely, how lovingly, He knows every one of us, may we bend our own frail, imperfect beings to learn a little more of Him. For the knowledge of Him is light, and repentance, and strength, and love, that will grow and increase until the dim searchings of the earth and time are changed into the visions of heaven and eternity.

VIII.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

“Faith, Hope, and Charity—these three.”—1 *Cor.* xiii. 13.

WHICH of the two is the more striking—the thought how far God is away, or the thought how near He is? God’s invisibility, or His undeniable and unmistakable presence? His unapproachable hiddenness, or His fatherly Providence and His untiring love? We can only say that under both of these aspects He is worthy of praise, and glorious, and exalted above all for ever and ever. Every one of His attributes is a great deep; and it is the roar of these mighty abysses, calling to each other and answering to each other in the obscure night of human life, that fills the listening heart with awe, and at last gives the mind to understand how great a universe there is outside of this world and beyond the bounds of time and space.

But this much at least is true—that it is this very invisibility, spirituality, hiddenness, and inaccessibility of God that have given occasion to the most astounding triumphs of His power and providence. God cannot, of course, cease to be the Absolute and the Infinite. He cannot cease to dwell in light unapproachable. Man, on his part, cannot, during this period of probation, have any access to God except

such as is afforded by inference, by analogy, by effort; we do not yet see Him "as He is," or "face to face". Thus there is a great chasm between the Creator and the faculties of the creature. Yet what has been the history of God's dealings with man except the constant effort on the part of God, Who has created all things, to reach us, to touch us, and to draw us near to Himself? It is not merely that He has given to Himself, in this visible universe as seen by the light of man's Godlike reason, a witness and a mighty preacher. What He has done is far beyond this. He has brought into the very frame of nature herself that august and startling element which is called the supernatural. He began—not in the order of time, but in the counsels of His wisdom—by the Incarnation. He "took up" our nature, as the Fathers say, and united it to His own so closely that, without ceasing to be God, He was called, and He really was, and is, Man. He decreed, next, that He would dwell in every man (unless man rejected Him) by means of gifts and qualities so Divine that when they came into the human soul it could truly be said that He Himself had come. And He so lifted up human destiny that we were to inherit, not any ordinary happiness or union with Him, such as our nature would seem to challenge, but that Vision of Him face to face which no created intelligence could even look upon without being specially strengthened and elevated, and which is the Beatific Vision and Bliss supernatural. It is neither of the Incarnation nor of Life Everlasting that we are now to speak, but of this

present life, with its effort and its vicissitude, and of the part which is played therein by the supernatural. For Faith, Hope and Charity are the supernatural element in human life. It should be well understood that the word supernatural is here used in a very adequate, strong, and complete sense. The Supernatural, as understood by those who treat of the dealings of God with man, is that which is above and beyond human nature, or human faculties, if left to themselves. Human nature would not be human nature at all without certain constituents, powers, and endowments. These things human nature has of itself, without any further action on the part of God than is implied in His creation and His general providence. But the being of man, though it cannot demand to be lifted above its sphere, is perfectly capable of opening itself to whatever the beneficence of its heavenly Father may send it. Thus, although it is natural to us to suffer dissolution or temporal death, yet if immortality were conferred upon our bodies, there is nothing to prevent our becoming immortal. And although it is part of our nature that the senses and the lower appetites should be independent of the reason and sometimes rebellious, yet a special gift of God could entirely do away with this, as happened with our first parents. These privileges we justly call supernatural. But at present we are thinking of a supernatural order which is infinitely higher than this. Moreover, we are not here concerned with the interference in this world in which we live of persons or beings from another world—

from heaven, from hell, or from death. These things are possible, and are sometimes permitted; not, however, in the random and blasphemous fashion which profane innovators in these days would have credulous people believe. That which is done in this lower world even by the holy Angels themselves, though it may truly be called supernatural, is not supernatural in our present sense. The Angels are created beings like ourselves. We are here concerned with an interference, an order of achievement, which, in its origin, is entirely outside of all creation, whether existent or possible. Through the Incarnation there has come about a certain communication between the Infinite God and our human nature which is as stupendous as it is beneficent. It is a "participation of the nature of God". This is St. Peter's phrase. "He hath given to us," says St. Peter, "great and precious promises, so that by them you are made partakers," or sharers, "in the Divine nature" (1 *Peter* i. 4). On these words St. Leo says, "Recognise, Christian man, your dignity; you have become a partaker of the nature of God; return not, by your unworthy life, to the poor and base condition from which you have been raised up" (*De Nativ. Domini*, Serm. i.). The Church constantly refers to this great Christian fact. At the Offertory of the Mass, the celebrant thus prays: "O God, Who didst wonderfully create the noble nature of man, and hast still more wonderfully restored it, grant to us, by this mystery of wine and of water, to be partakers of the divinity of Him Who did deign to become a partaker of our humanity". In

the Preface for the feast of the Ascension she thus sings of her Redeemer: "He manifested Himself after His resurrection to all His disciples, and in their sight was lifted up to heaven, that He might bestow upon us to become partakers of His Divinity". And, once more, she prays, in the secret prayer of the Mass of the fourth Sunday after Pentecost: "O God, Who, by Thy adorable dealings with us in this Holy Sacrifice, hast made us partakers of the one and supreme God-head". This perpetually recurring phrase, and many other expressions of Holy Scripture, of the Church, and of the Fathers, plainly imply that there is given to man through Christ a spiritual endowment which is the immediate work of God, and which no other agency can bestow. Whether we call it the grace of the Redeemer, or the gift of the Spirit, or life in Christ, or the adoption of sons, it is in its essential feature a communication of the Infinite Deity, not as Creator, but as Sanctifier. Creation is one order; by our creation we have a certain end or purpose, a nature adapted to that end, and faculties to attain it. As a matter of fact, man never was left in this mere order of nature; but he might have been. There is, however, another order. God appoints man an end—*viz.*, the Vision of Himself face to face—which can only be attained by infusing into his nature God's own divinity; not God's divine nature in its adequate sense, but a divine ray, a divine spark, an element which only God's entirely free bounty could furnish. This is the supernatural order. In that order God communicates to a creature a perfection infinitely

higher than its own order. "We bear about with us," says St. Athanasius, "the Spirit; Christ carries us, and we carry God" (*De Incarn. contra Arianos*, n. 8).

Among all the numerous names which are given by the Holy Ghost Himself to this wondrous action of the Divinity on our humanity, there are none which describe it more fully than these three—Faith, Hope, and Charity. There are some which refer more immediately to God's action—such as "the indwelling of the Spirit"; some to Christ's merits, as "the being washed in the Blood of the Lamb"; some describe it in general terms, as "Life," or "the wedding garment"; some denote God's love as "adoption"; or His bounty as "Grace"; some express the soul's state in reference to sin as "sanctification"; and, finally, some denote more particularly the happy soul's readiness to co-operate with prevenient grace, such as "the Gifts of the Holy Ghost". But Faith, Hope, and Charity describe the supernatural state of a human soul in full activity. They express the blazing sacrifice which the High Priest, Christ, has kindled on the stony altar of human nature. There is the fuel, there is the pile arranged to burn, there is the body of the victim, and there is the all-devouring flame, hurrying up to the blue heavens, and dying high up in the crystal air.

That a human heart should believe, should hope, and should reach out with love to the things that are desirable, is not wonderful; it is natural and essential. These three words—Faith and Hope and Love—have been used in all the world's ages, and coloured all the

world's literatures. Just in the same way, human nature itself had been in the world for a hundred generations when at last the year came for a Man to be called Jesus; and then human nature was what the Saints called "deified," its attributes becoming (not confused with the Divinity, but) possessed by the Divinity. Faith had played a busy part in the world. It had made the child trust its mother, the wife her husband, the husband his wife; it had drawn men after leaders and kings; it had won battles, moulded nations, given vitality to empires and dynasties. It had bound men together, and made human society not only possible, but sometimes happy and oftentimes strong and durable. So Hope, which is the offspring of belief, had been the support of innumerable heavy-laden multitudes, lifting their hearts from the earth, lightening toil, and shedding over the too sombre scene of this mortal life the hues and lights of a world out of sight but possible, of gladsome things not yet realised but about to be. And Love had not only lived in the world, but had burned and raged in the world. Love, which was made to take hold of God, had made but little of its glorious destiny. It had fallen, like a lost angel, from the skies to the depths, and stirred up every deep, misusing the world, ravaging rational nature, bringing down woes on the human race; but always mighty, and sometimes pure enough and peaceable enough to show whose Hand had imparted it to the nature of man. Then the time came for these three great elemental powers to be "deified," as humanity had

been True, from the very beginning the Holy Spirit had wrought in the hearts of His servants. But when the Word was made Flesh and the Blood of Calvary was shed, then was the time when the spiritual outpouring was to come, not in the dew or the drops of partial showers, but in the flow of great rivers and the floods of mighty oceans: the time of the Christian Church, the Christian Presence, and the Christian Sacraments. Then Faith was to become supernatural and divine; Hope to become supernatural and to pierce the highest heavens; Charity to become supernatural, and to bring back the world to God, and restore God to a world which He seemed well-nigh to have lost. It was for man—for us and for our sakes—that this was wrought by our Redeemer. His creature—His rational creation, for which all else was created—was the object of His eternal and unfailing love. To lift it up and ennoble it—to endow it with the inexhaustible riches of His own treasures—to unite it with that Divinity which is at once its source, its stay, and its perfection—this was why He lived, suffered, died. This was why His holy Spirit resolved, by means of the Christian dispensation, to clothe every son born into, or carried into, His Church's fold, with the three specifically Christian virtues, the three divine or theological virtues, the threefold communication of Himself—Faith, Hope, and Charity.

The men who profess to love humanity preach that man must be raised up and ennobled. There is nothing that ever does, or can, adequately ennoble human nature except Faith, Hope, and Charity. The reason

is that nothing else will raise its appetites from the mire ; because if you once allow that there is nothing to strive for except the finite and the temporal, you sanction material enjoyment as an end, if not as the only end ; and however moderately a man may behave in carrying out that view, he cannot rise very high ; he is in constant danger of lapsing very low ; and humanity in general will gravitate where inclination points. Even if the grosser appetites could be restrained, the nature of man is not now so constituted as to be content with a destiny which could include no more than these three things—the love of one's self, the love of one's neighbour, and the cultivation of one's faculties. This has been preached. Numerous thinkers of half-truths and discoverers in low-lying spheres have discoursed in this century on the dignity of man and the perfectibility of the human race ; and the ultimate result has never been more attractive than a vision in which pleasure, organic and intellectual, was vaguely asserted to be bound up with philanthropy, and man was never to get out of the limitations of place, time, and matter. This kind of Gospel is said to be declining. If it is, it is because it is neither frank enough for the pagan nor spiritual enough for the Christian. The Divine, the Christian ideal of human dignity, is one which fixes the heart on the revealed destiny of eternity, and which welcomes struggle and conflict until the day of victory shall come. For this is given the divine endowment of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Supernatural Faith is an energy of the spirit

which gives us the power to realise, to hold, to cling. Like its two sisters, it is not an acquirement of the human mind, but an immediate endowment of the Holy Ghost. How little do we remember this! Faith, as St. Paul says, puts the future and the invisible before our very eyes—into our very hands: it is “the substance of the things we hope for, the argument of the things that do not appear” (*Heb. xi. 1*). Hope makes us humbly confident—and confident, above all, in the abounding mercy of our Redeemer and our Judge. Charity is that divine force which takes hold of the whole of that element of “desire” which permeates human nature. The ancient Greek philosophers called this the “reaching out” power. For human nature essentially “reaches out”. It has aspirations, general and vague; instincts, some high and some low; wishes, that lead it wandering through many an unexplored region; wants, some of which spring from its own constitution, whilst others are acquired; and a will, which can be captivated on the one hand by surrounding things, but which, on the other, is a strong and active vital spring, setting in motion the machinery of human life. We are always “reaching out” at something; very often at what is unworthy, frivolous, or forbidden. Ever since our first mother, Eve, “reached out” at the fatal fruit, the great problem has been how to regulate this terrible energy of wanting and wishing and willing. And, behold, Charity is infused into our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given to us (*Rom. v. 5*). Like an angel who

descends in calm majesty into a city where men quarrel and kill each other, heavenly Charity takes human nature by the hand, and brings back peace, order, and nobility. Some desires are trampled under foot like serpents; some are guided and directed like noble animals which serve man's needs; but the heart of human nature, the intellectual judgment and will—these are lifted altogether above the earth. Only God, only Heaven, only immortality—only the divinely revealed beneficence of the Lord of all things—only this is henceforth the principal, the chosen, the adequate object towards which a redeemed being “reaches out”. This is the true man—noble, dignified, strong, incorrupt; to him alone belong the true beauty, the true venerableness, the true augustness, of humanity. He is lifted up to this, as if some fine tree of the primeval forest should be visited with such sun and such propitious rains as should carry it up to magnificence, and spread out its branches in glory and beauty such as the land had never known.

Yes, it is only by the Divine element in man that he is truly noble; and that Divine element is Faith, Hope, and Charity. And we do not speak of a barren and speculative nobility which has no hold upon this present life, but languishes, like some bloodless hermit on a pillar, whilst the warm and fertile world lives its life below. Faith and Hope and Love have lost none of their vitality by becoming transfused with a strain that is from above. If they were busy and powerful in the world before, they are still stronger, they are still more visible now. Faith and Hope, for example,

have enlarged their sphere, as the eagle rises from his nest in the cliff to soar above the mountain and circle widely over seas and shores which less mighty wings could never attain. Faith and Hope, as supernatural gifts of God, dominate life more boundlessly in proportion as they are lifted above it. All the low, small, partial purposes of human life disappear, or become means to a grand end. Life is no longer a puzzle. The contrast between man's greatness and his littleness finds its explanation. The difficulty about the inequalities and hardships of existence no longer exists. Poverty is the riches of the future; suffering is the pledge of the great inheritance. Prosperity and plenty are to be feared and distrusted; they are not the grand object of breathless and continuous struggle. Evil of every kind, abound as it may in human life, is doomed to be conquered at last; violence must die, the triumph of sin must cease, the hour of pride must pass away. Things may seem to move slowly, and the direction of existence may sometimes be difficult to understand; but all generations of time, all cycles of ages, are only one age to the Maker and Father; all movement, all change, all vicissitude finds its explanation and completion below the horizon—out of the sight of natural vision, but clearly seen by the eye of Faith. Death itself is no longer a barrier—no longer a dark impenetrable abyss where life and motion cease or are swallowed up. The land beyond the grave is all explored and mapped out in revelation—Faith can read its record. The grave itself is open and lightsome now, since the Angels came and

rolled the stone away from a grave on Calvary, and said, "Behold the place where they laid Him!" (*Matt.* xvi. 6). And the limitless land of eternity, with its plains and oceans, its rivers and mountains, seen by Faith and Hope, and seen—not indeed with absolute clearness—but with a solid and vivid reality which makes it almost a part of our very experience, causes this temporal world to shrink into littleness and its interests to fade away into insignificance. For the views of Faith and Hope are not mere speculation; not merely the learning of a scholar, the deductions of a philosopher, the theories of a school of thought, the humour of a generation. They are a religion; and, what is more, they are a divine living spirit, the immediate effect of the Spirit of God, carried about with us to whom that Spirit hath been given. The rose breathes its fragrance and the pine-trees their aroma; and the Christian heart, Christianised by Faith and Hope, breathes immortality. The Christian may and does reason about immortal things, and prove immortal existences, and meditate on eternal years; but his faith acts with little impulse from reasoning or imagination; it constructs and sustains the grand universe of the invisible and the future when faculties fall short and human powers fail. Thus the Christian child, with no more learning than its catechism, with no other school than the altar-steps, by the power of Faith and Hope, strives to follow Jesus and to prepare for eternity—a theory of life which Plato never rose to, and which Spencer does not know. Never can parents and teachers suffi-

ciently insist on removing the obstacles to the infused Faith of Baptism by turning the heart of the child to Christ and watching over its tender years. Let this be done, and Faith will do the rest. Thus again, although instruction is a great grace and ignorance is a great danger, yet the comparatively rude and uninstructed Catholic may have a clearness and a practical grasp on the things of God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Blessed Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin, and the Church, which mere learning can never give. The more reason is there for doing our best to do away with conditions like extreme destitution, drunkenness, and evil surroundings, which, like the accumulations choking a crystal spring, hinder the holy Faith of our baptised people from doing itself justice. Thus again the grace of martyrdom itself is not far from those who possess divine Faith; the grace of martyrdom which testifies, in a supreme act of confession, that Christian faith is not information, or opinion, or fancy, or speculation, but a clinging, as vital as one's very being, to the revealed universe of God's beneficent mercy.

If Faith and Hope interpret this world and our life, Divine Charity transforms it. First, Charity, as we have seen, takes hold of all the powers of human nature. * Charity says to the supreme faculty of reason, Thou shalt lift thyself above earthly mists, and turn thy keenest sight upon thy God. Charity makes the will holy; that is, she gives to the will God and God alone; and she accompanies this imperative bestowal with a stern command of discipline and code

of repression, so that the unholy things which prowl about the sanctuary may find no entrance there. Charity seizes the fancy, the emotions, the affections. She may justly do so, because she holds the reason first, and where reason leads, the feelings not only may, but ought, to follow. Charity lays her hand even upon the very senses of the bodily frame, that neither eye nor ear may act, nor hand or foot move, except for God and God alone. Thus enthroned upon human nature, she gives her laws to the whole world. The rocks, the trees, the beasts may know her not; but there is nothing, living or not living, that she cannot turn into fuel for her own divine fire. The world flows on in its course, with its millions of acts and vicissitudes; where the stream touches her it sparkles into a thousand diamonds, which are supernatural intention, heavenly merit, intense love. She marches through the world, through history, trampling on sin, saving sinners, rebuking the flesh, fighting the devil. She brings pride to the fountains of our Saviour's mercy; she gives to human creatures such energy as no force or desire of nature can simulate; she transforms every kind of human love into a likeness of herself. She not only sets up altars to her God, tabernacles for her Saviour's presence, houses for His Word to dwell in, but she seeks out the poor and the suffering, and she gathers to her the aged and the orphan. It is through her, as through a second Incarnation, that the Divinity of God is felt and seen in the world below. She is the fire that Jesus came to cast upon the earth; the fire which He carried in His Sacred Heart and in

His hands. She set up the Cross; she drove in the nails. And when He went away to Heaven, and lifting up His hands blessed His disciples and the world, it was from His hands that she fell in a thousand scintillations on the human race; and wherever her spark fell it was, and is, full of the power and fragrance of the Heart of Jesus.

“If I have not Charity,” says St. Paul, in that glowing passage of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiii. 2), “I am nothing.” Let me say, If you have not Faith, Hope, and Charity, you are nothing. For although the Apostle seems to contrast Charity with Faith, the Faith that he means is dead Faith: Faith that remains in a soul in mortal sin. Living Faith means Charity, for Charity is its life. Here is a sentence passed upon the universal world. Without Faith, Hope, and Charity—nothing! A universe to be burnt; empires to pass away with no record left; literature to perish; busy lives to dissolve and cease like the foam on the wave or the sound of the tempest; men’s work, aims, memorials, monuments, to leave no trace behind when eternity shall begin to roll. Only one force, power, or element to be capable of leaping the chasm between life and blessed immortality—of building mansions in heaven—of attaining to the Master of life and bliss—Faith, Hope, and Charity. Let the sinner pause! Let the careless man bethink himself! Let the busy man fear! Let us all fall on our knees before the mighty invisible Spirit, and pray Him to touch our hearts with His visitation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IX.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

(Preached at the opening of the Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Cambridge, 15th October, 1890.)

“The Obedience of Faith.”—*Rom. i. 5.*

THE solemn dedication and opening of a church—and especially of a church like this—seems to make faith more easy by making the unseen more sensible and the spiritual world more visible. Another roof where men may gather to pray; another sanctuary where the altar of Divine communication invites men to draw near; another house where the Christian heart finds a home and a shelter and the love of a Father—far more truly because more spiritually than in any other building of the hands of man;—it is to thank God for this that we are assembled. And if we believe in these things—if we believe in prayer and in sacramental ministration, in the duty of the love of God above all other things—then our beliefs must be deepened to-day; and as with men who have lived long hours in the sunshine, or have walked in the sound of the sea, this hour must set vibrating in our souls (which God has made) the feeling of the hidden world of the spirit, in whose mysterious spaces we

draw our every breath. There are those here present—the clergy and the flock—who will bear me out in this. And there are others, perhaps, who do not sympathise because they disagree in matters more remote, more radical, than altar and sacraments; whilst, again, there may be those who envy us—envy us not, indeed, this noble church, but the faith which has offered it to God, the faith which now thanks God for its solemn consecration and the presence of Christ, and the faith which for many years to come, as we hope, will use it to approach nearer to God—to God the first and the last. I cannot find it in my heart, my brethren, to utter on this joyous morning anything that may taste of the bitterness of controversy. But you will allow me to speak of Faith, because it is the “substance” of the things we hope for and the “proof” of that which is not seen (*Heb. xi. 1*), and to speak of that aspect of Faith which St. Paul has called in three places of the Epistle to the Romans (i. 5, x. 16, and xvi. 26) the “obedience” of faith.

When a Christian believes he does not *see* that what he accepts is true or certain, but he sees that there is sufficient evidence on which to believe it. Sometimes, indeed, the matter may be within the province of sense or of reason, and our sense or our reason may make us sure of it. But, even then, the assent or adhesion of Faith rests on motives which are quite distinct, and which belong to Faith alone. Thus, there are some points of religion which we must be certain of before we can have Faith; there are others which we accept both because we can prove them and be-

cause we see they are evidently among believable things; and there are others, again, which we have no means of proving for ourselves, but which we must believe on God's authority, if we are to believe anything on His authority at all.

A man must trust his senses and his reason before he can believe anything. He must possess some proof, at least virtual or implicit, that there is a God, before he can believe in God's word. Then we come into a border-land where things are both known, in the strict sense of that word, and believed; where some men know more than others, but where all, if they are believers, believe. Thus immortality and eternity, the justice and mercy of the Supreme Being, the existence and the Divine mission of Christ, and the principles and rules of morality, may be proved, and yet must be believed. Finally, there is a region—described by St. Paul in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians—where we have no evidence, but must trust to the revelation of God. St. Paul calls this the “mystery of Christ” (v. 4), “the mystery hidden from eternity in God Who created all things” (v. 9). For in these things, as he said to the Corinthians, the wisdom of the wise is confounded, and the princes of worldly learning must confess their ignorance (1 *Cor.* chaps. i. and ii.). God hath revealed them, that our faith may not “stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (i. 5).

Thus, my brethren, if the foundation of the Christian religion rest upon the solid ground of our human nature and its faculties, the innermost citadel of that

religion is built on the revealed Word of God. To reveal, in the Christian sense, is to make a communication over and beyond what human means could give. What God reveals must be true and worthy of all acceptance. Even if the limited faculties of men do not adequately comprehend what is presented, yet it is to be welcomed; for truth is mighty; and even truth which passes high above our heads, like some majestic tempest of a loftier sphere than ours, may be fringed with fertilising showers, whilst the flashing of its dim lightnings and the roll of its mysterious thunder never fail to stir and awaken human hearts made by that same Lord and Ruler Who speaks in nature and in mystery, Who schools His children by degrees to the unveiled truth of their eternal destiny. No reasonable man, then, can ask any further question than this—Has God revealed? For if God has revealed, then that revelation has to be embraced and held with thanksgivings.

And here, my brethren, we come face to face with the difficulty of those who, as I have said, envy us our faith. For these do not raise abstract doubts about the possibility of the miraculous speech of God with His creature man. They may not be very eager to believe that it is so; but they will not deny that it is possible. Nay, they see further than this. They see that there exists a large mass of evidence for this interference of the Creator in the spiritual concerns of His creatures—evidence varying in kind and in degree, but of such a nature that there are found in every age and race innumerable minds whom it attracts and con-

vinces. They cannot shut their eyes to the world-renowned histories, in the Bible and outside of it, which seem to attest the solicitude of God for the race of men. They find in the records of mankind and in the facts which come under their own eyes proofs that the mind of man is so made as to leap to meet the voice of God; that there are movements in man's heart and aspirations springing from it which, like the far-off ripple on the ocean, seem to indicate the breathings of a possible tempest. They cannot deny that wide tracts of the world have risen and welcomed the message which gave out that it was from heaven; and that the greatest spirits of many great ages have lived only to love it, and perhaps died to prove how they loved it. Neither can they dispute that moral regeneration has followed in its track, nor that justice, purity, and charity have ever blossomed under its protection, and have never been safe where it was not received. These things are not called in question. But we are told that such evidence as this—and all Christian or Catholic evidence—is only evidence to certain minds; that personal temperament has more to do with its acceptance than reason or proof; and that minds differently constituted may sigh enviously after the consolations of faith, but have no power to force themselves to accept what they cannot find evidence for. There is some truth and much error in this statement. What is true is, that temperament—that is, the disposition of the heart, or the moral qualities, as distinguished from the intellectual ones—has very much indeed to do with the acceptance of revealed truths.

What is wrong is, that a man has no power over his own temperament, and the further implication that the only way for some minds to obtain faith is to force the understanding to say it sees what it cannot see.

Let us admit, first, that no seeing power—and the intellect is a seeing power—can be forced to see what is really not visible. Sight, whether of the mind or of the sense, implies three things: a power, an object, and the union or inter-relation of the two. Even Omnipotence could not make a faculty to be impressed by a non-existent object, or, given the due circumstances, fail to be impressed when the object was straight before it. We not only admit but most strongly maintain that man's mind is in some respects infallible; that in certain cases when it asserts a thing, that thing must be true; when it cannot see a thing, that thing is not there. But this infallibility, though very wide, is very shallow; it covers a great extent of space, but you soon touch the bottom everywhere. I will leave the philosophers to define how far the mind's Yes or No is beyond the possibility of error. To find it out you must trace the stream of intelligence to its source. You must travel far up, across the morasses of uncertainty, beyond the endless windings of human opinion, up the broad rivers of tradition, into the wild solitudes and mountain tracks where few men care to penetrate—and there you may discover the well-spring of infallible perception; there you may see the clear principles of abstract being, of absolute truth, of the good, and the just, and the beautiful.

But these solitary and silent springs are of little avail to the multitudes who have to live human lives, to distinguish friends from foes, to discern the right road from the wrong one. In the application of first principles, in reasoning, in the setting forth of consequences, and in the thousand uses of the faculty of reason in the life of every day, the intellect is liable to every kind of error. The stream is soon discoloured, the waters divide, the currents press here and press there, the channels grow narrow, dark, and dangerous ; and man must be controlled, managed, and guided.

A thing of faith—or rather, the believableness of the things of faith—is not evident with the evidence of first principles. The authority of the Church, the inspiration of Scripture, the miracles of Christ's life, and the great fact of the Catholic Church—these are sufficiently evident. I say there is evidence, and that evidence is sufficient. Putting difficulties and objections on one side—and we have a right to put them on one side, for there is confessedly not one difficulty or objection which clearly destroys even one of the positions I have mentioned—it is certain that there is for every mind evidence of believableness. What is meant is, that if the atmosphere were clear and the light not artificially darkened, there is sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable man in being certain—in excluding from his mind all reasonable doubt. For example : a father informs his child that God has revealed that there are three Persons in one God. I affirm that the child, who has heard no objections raised, may be

reasonably certain that God has so revealed: just as it might reasonably believe if its father asserted that the nearest town was so many miles off. Again: a priest instructs his flock that God has revealed the fact of everlasting punishment. The status of the priest, as known to the flock, affords a reasonable ground for their being sure that this is so—at least provided that no questions have darkened the air. Once more, let me suppose that a General Council, or the Pope, teaches that God has revealed the Real Presence of our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist. I affirm that to all whose intelligence is not preoccupied—to all, perhaps, except those who have saturated themselves with hostile controversy, or who are under the influence of a contradicting authority—there is abundant mental justification for accepting this as true. And, finally, let it be supposed that a capable mind, seeking for the truth, has duly inquired and read and reasoned, I say that such a mind will be sure to encounter sufficient proof of the fact that Catholic doctrine is revealed to justify him in accepting it.

We have nothing further to do, for the moment, with the first three of these cases. The evidence on which, in each case, the believableness of the doctrine is accepted, is sufficient; but as it is not overwhelming it may be attacked, and plausibly attacked; then the believer has the interior gift or endowment of divine faith to keep firm and steady his adhesion to the things he has been taught. But in regard to the inquirer who has, or ought to have, convinced himself of Catholic truth, it is necessary to see why it often happens that

he has truth staring him in the face, and yet cannot see it—how it is that he has evidence of the believableness of things, and yet does not believe.

My explanation is, that that inquirer has not brought his *will* to bear upon his intelligence. What I contend for is that no one can see the believableness of revealed things unless his will is rightly disposed; and that in order to be rightly disposed, his will, which is the moving and guiding influence in a man's rational activity, must be solicitously and carefully handled. Faith is an obedience. No one can deny that the Christian theory is, that faith is as much an act of humble obedience as it is a mental acceptance. St. Paul describes his apostleship as given him in order to bring the nations to "obey the faith" (*Rom.* i. 5). The grand word of the Epistles which is used to describe the Apostolic Office is a word meaning "herald," with its derivatives; it is frequently translated by "preacher," but it evidently means much more; it signifies one who has a message of authority, the correlative of which is dutiful acceptance. And in the tenth chapter of this same Epistle, after St. Paul has proclaimed that the Gentiles are to be called, and that therefore he must "preach" to them, he exclaims, "But not all (of the Gentiles) obey the Gospel" (x. 16). Again, in the concluding chapter of the Epistle, he refers to the grand and chief subject of all apostolic preaching—the coming of Jesus Christ—a mystery, he says, which is now made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the precept of the eternal God, "unto the obedience of faith"

(xvi. 26). Scripture, preaching, obedience, then—these things are involved in Christianity. I will refer to one other passage, which is sufficiently emphatic to make all who regard mere reasoning as a bar to religious acceptance pause and consider; “the weapons of our warfare,” he says to the Corinthians (2 *Cor.* x. 4), “are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ”. You will note the phrases; “destroying” human reasoning against divine knowledge; “bringing into captivity,” not the will merely, but the understanding, and thus causing the understanding to obey. Now these are just the things which many men in these days declare to be not only unjustifiable, but even impossible. Let them at least be sure that the founders of Christianity take a different view. Can they doubt that this was Christ’s own teaching? Did *He* appeal to argument, save on the matter of His own mission, when He appealed to the historic Scriptures? Does He not set down as the type of the Christian believer the little child? Is not the earliest Christian ideal the flock which follows and obeys its shepherd? Do we not see this in the Acts of the Apostles, and in all the oldest Christian records?

Let us face this question of forcing the intelligence to accept. Will any one deny that there are cases where evidence itself is blurred and made ineffectual by prejudice, by passion, and by wilfulness? And how can this mist be dissipated except by the energy

of the will? How can this veil be torn asunder except by effort and action? There are especially two aspects of religious truth which predispose a man to reject it with impatience and anger. One is its strangeness; the other is its aggressiveness.

To thousands of the best minds of the modern world the region of religion—and I am here speaking *à fortiori* of Catholicism, which alone is religion in a thoroughly adequate sense—is novel, strange, and perturbing. They are cultured. They have been trained to accuracy of observation and breadth of generalisation. But the matter of their occupation has been literature, mathematics, physical science, politics. If they have pursued mental science, it has been limited by experiment, and has stopped short at the boundaries of the visible world. When they encounter religious evidences they find themselves in a world far more novel than any explorer of unknown continents ever gazed upon. They find the universe suddenly grown vast and boundless, stretching away on every side into eternity. The God Who to them had been a far-off power, a vague Name, an unknown form, becomes personal; a King to be served, a loving Father to be loved again, a Judge to be feared, a Rewarder for ever and ever. For men and women find the only final purpose of their life is intercommunion with their God. To make Himself nearer to human frailty God has made Himself man, without ceasing to be God. To purify, to prepare, to lift up the human soul, God made man has founded a vast and enduring kingdom, where His voice is always

heard, where the touch of His hand is felt, and the stream of His redeeming blood for ever flows. It is for this the earth subsists. Science and letters, the rise and fall of states, the ebb and flow of human movements—all are of no account when put in comparison with redemption or with prayer, with the holiness of the saints, or the saving of a single soul. Can we be surprised if the mind of the non-religious investigator recoils with some impatience before such a vision as this? It seems to upset his theories; to threaten the foundations of his mental condition; to prove him wrong. Or if it leaves his culture where it was, it claims to push its way into his life, to force him to make room for a universe of fresh conceptions, and to dwarf into insignificance all that on which he and his world had spent so much time and so much energy. In fact it rouses aversion and repulsion. To weigh evidences under the influence of such feelings is impossible. Therefore it follows that such a man, in order to appreciate the religious evidence which exists, must first purify his heart, steady his will, and drive from the field certain unfair and disturbing preoccupations with which the intelligence alone is powerless to deal.

But if his heart rebel against the revolution which belief in religious truth would seem to threaten in the sphere of his ideas, much more keenly is he inclined to resent its aggressiveness in the region of his conduct. For it claims to dominate his moral life. It claims to regulate his thoughts, words, and deeds. It points him to a moral purpose and moral motives—

whereas he has hitherto followed impulses and appetites. Human life is only a probation and a preparation. The real life begins when death has been passed. A man's only concern is his soul—and his soul's only concern is the God Who made it for Himself. A vast division of human actions which hitherto were neutral or excusable now take the colours and the shapes of deadly sins. Repentance, forgiveness, grace, and perseverance are no longer names in an encyclopædia, but matters of life and death. Prayer must predominate in all occupation, and as long as the days succeed one another. What is more, the proud and self-contained man must listen to the priest, and must bow his head to a visible dispensation of sacrament and ministration where the high-born and the intellectual have no privileges more than the lowly and the poor. There is no wonder if repulsion takes hold of a heart which is confronted with these imperious and disturbing demands, and blinds it, as an angry man is blinded, to the evidence of credibility. For the heart of a man, even if religion have been a ruling force in it from youth, is naturally prone to independence, and averse from believing in that which must bind him and check him and rule him. But it is far worse if early impressions have made him look upon religious truth as fable; if he has been taught to think sin a figment, the Church a tyranny, the holy Sacraments superstition or magic, and a priest an impostor. It is far worse if he have been penetrated through and through, by early teaching, by intercourse with men, and by reading, with the essential spirit of Protestantism—I

mean the conviction that a man has a right, in matters of religion, to judge for himself; the absolute "Anti-Christ" to that which is preached by St. Paul, and called the obedience of faith. No inquirer is inquiring fairly if he does not take into account this perverse state of the will. There can be no road unless the rocks are broken and the valleys filled up.

Such preparation of the will for faith is negative. It is in the nature of removing the obstacles. But there is a further preparation. The heart should surely go further than this. If God has given a revelation, it is a personal communication of the most awful significance. There are many indications, even to non-believers, that God has made these communications. One is found in the very nature of a loving and personal God. We cannot think on what He is, what He can do, what He desires; and, on the other hand, on what a man's immortal soul and destiny are, without expecting a revelation. The east seems white with the promise of a dawn. Let the heart of man look that way! Let him rouse himself in his want, his weakness—his uncertainty, if you please, but let him arise and worship. Let him lift his eyes to the hill-tops whence help must come. Let him cry out, "My help is from the Lord, Who made the heavens and the earth" (*Ps.* cxxii. 2). To speak to me, let him say, would be in keeping with His Fatherly Providence, which I believe and adore, although I know not whether He hath spoken or not. If He spoke, my duty and my joy would be to listen and to obey—to break all the hardness of my heart and to listen with

awe to His word and message. Beforehand, O my God, I offer my homage to Thy revelations. I anticipate and accept beforehand the fashion of Thy revealing. I do not look for Thy speaking to me alone—but only to share Thy common bounty. I look not to be assumed to secret mountain tops and to meet Thy Majesty face to face. I look not for a message written across the sky, or for the sound of the trumpets of Archangels, or for the thunders and the lightnings of Sinai. But I will hearken to Thy messenger, whoever he may be. If it be the unlettered men who were intoxicated with the wine of Pentecost, I will hearken. If it be the assemblies of Thy fallible servants, defining infallible truth in reliance on Thy promise, I will hearken. If it be an old man marked from among men by being the successor of Peter the Fisherman, I will hearken. Yea, I will bow my head to pontiff and to priest—will seek Thy voice in the embodied traditions of Thy visible Church; where Thy finger pointeth I will follow; for Thou art God, and Thy Hand hath formed me, and my soul was made for Thee alone, to seek Thee, to adore Thee, and to listen for the voice of Thy command.

It is *this* spirit of preparedness which, if there is such a thing as the Christian revelation, must absolutely be found in a mind which inquires, or else the credibility of religious truth cannot shine out. It is the tribute of the creature to the Creator. Let me add that it is also the Creator's grace to His creature. Before the grace of faith, before the great Christian virtue and gift of divine faith has come down as with

the wings of a dove on the anxious heart, this preliminary grace is given—this grace of worship, reverence, and trust—this softening of natural hardness, this emptying out of the heart's pride. Then the testimonies of God are seen; then proofs and motives and the beauty of doctrine and the sweetness of devotion stand out clear, like the hills when the smoke of the tempest has drifted away. Thus the spirit of obedience leads to faith. Then comes faith. Then is given the gift which makes the confessor and the doctor and the martyr; the gift which illuminates the intelligence and makes the soul cling fast; the gift which holds the heart humble and kills the unregenerate venom of carnal criticism. The weakness of fallen man required an infused gift like this. And once descended upon the earth below, divine faith throws the protection of her shield and spear over the whole field of supernatural conflict. She champions the great creeds and the grand foundation dogmas of Christianity. She arms the faithful in the defence of Christian morality, keen to see when the so-called science of the world would modify Christ's law. She marshals the visible Church. She secures reverence for the Pontiff's chair and for the humble priest who expounds the gospel to his little flock. The world-wide practice of prayer and ceremony is her concern, and she leads her servants reverently to shrine and altar, to the sharing in sacrifice and sacrament wherever a church lifts its roof. The holy liturgy is the work of divine faith, and faith teaches men to love it. The great voice of popular devotion speaks at her prompting. She lights the

lamps of sanctuaries and gathers the flock to prayer and praise. For all that leads to God is her charge. In some things she is very stern; but in all that seems to touch Him she is wistful, watchful, and pious, lest perhaps one syllable should be missed in His divine communications. For she does not disdain to be pious. Her first instinct is to bow low before her God. All that belongs to Him she reveres—His Most Blessed Mother, Queen of all His ministers, His angels, and His saints. She seeks His glory in the heavens; and on the earth she can hardly bring herself to blame, for harmless excess in devotion, even the ignorant who unwittingly invoke her name or the enthusiasts who are too rash in asserting the supernatural interference of God. For she longs to hear the voice of God, that she may obey with all her heart.

Truly, most truly, is this dear and precious gift of faith, and the piety of faith, a possession which the world may envy. “Much peace have they that love Thy law,” said the Psalmist when he meditated in quickly-flowing verses on the revelation of God to His people (*Ps. cxviii.* 165), A peace which we cannot doubt Christ came to give; a “joy and peace in believing,” as St. Paul calls it (*Rom. xv.* 13), which is nothing less than a note of genuine Christianity. This church, filled with the solemnity of the Divine Presence, dim with the mystery of divine communication, lifting up its august vault that he who enters may bow down and obey, embodies the great Catholic Church of the Son of God. It stands apart and by itself in a city of churches, in a province of churches.

It is ringed round by churches not unlike itself, but often fairer and more august—by Ely and Norwich, Southwell and Peterborough, and many of lesser note—on this plain of Eastern England. And from its tower one may see the roofs and spires of those which fill this city with their beauty and their interest. Into the company of these it comes, as a sister to sisters—but to sisters who have gone astray. Their builders built them for faith and for obedience. Wilfrid and Etheldreda, the great Bishops of Lincoln, the monks of the fen country, and the royal and noble founders of this University—these built as we have built to-day; and their grand churches stand mournful in their captivity, and seem to stretch out hands to her who this day lights her lamps and opens her doors. As for her, she knows that she is living. For them it is written, as to another Church and her ruler of old: “Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead” (*Apoc.* iii. 1); “Thou sayest I am rich, and have need of nothing; and thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (v. 17). They have pastors who do not teach; a flock which does not obey. May God bring to good fruit all the earnestness and sacrifice and love of our Divine Lord which He has given to so many who do not see what we see, here as elsewhere in the land. They throng to monastic Norwich; they are proud of the glories of King’s and Trinity; they rebuild St. Peter’s own Peterborough. For what is done for God’s zeal, God will give the reward. But it is only the Church which teaches men to bow the neck, like the Sicambrian of old—to burn

the independence they have worshipped and to accept the obedience they despised—it is only she who can give them, adequate and complete, the religion of Christ. She may stand alone, but the glory of the Lord filleth her; and blessed are they that enter her gates.

X

THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Preached at St. Wilfrid's, Preston, on Sunday, May 22, 1892.)

"Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."—*St. James* i. 22.

THESE words may be justly taken in a sense much wider than as enforcing the necessity of morality as well as of faith. The Apostle says that the Word must be followed by works. By "the Word" he means what he has already named in the preceding verse—"the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls" (v. 21). And three verses further back—"the Word of Truth, by which the Father of Lights hath begotten us" (v. 18). And again in the 25th verse of this same chapter—"The perfect law of liberty". The Word, therefore, in this passage of St. James, means undoubtedly the Faith and Revelation of Jesus Christ. For that is the Word engrafted upon all human natural knowledge, as the fruit-bearing tree is engrafted on the wild stock; that is the Word by which, being born again to God in the spirit, we become the children of God's adoption and love. That is the law which has displaced the ancient law which "brought nothing to perfection" (*Heb. viii. 19*), by giving true sanctity and the infused grace of Christ the Redeemer. And what

is meant by Works? The living in this law, the living according to this revelation ; the shaping of all human life, public and private, by what Christ has taught the world, and Christ has given the world. And if St. James, in his exhortation, seems to speak merely of bridling the tongue and of helping the needy, these were the illustrations which his hearers particularly required ; people who were given to discussion and scandal and forgetfulness of the poor. But his message is for all the world and for all time. We may venture to say that these are not the examples of bad Christianity that he would give were he writing in these days. It is true that evil speaking and unkindness are still widely-spread sins among those who profess to be Christians ; but we all know them to be sins, and to be anti-Christian sins ; whereas there are other consequences of this great principle of St. James which a large part of the world entirely ignore, and yet call themselves Christians all the same.

The new law, or the law of Christ, was really and truly a new dispensation. There are two other dispensations that we know of—the law of Moses and the law of nature. It differed widely from both. In all three dispensations the object and purpose of the Heavenly Father was to unite man's spiritual nature to Himself in this life, so as to make man worthy of a blissful and perpetual union with Him in a life to come. A man could save his soul before Moses was sent ; he could save his soul under the law of Sinai ; and he can do no more than save his soul under the law of Christ. Yet the law of

Christ is very different from the other two. It is intended to be the grand and final law; the other two led up to it. It is intended to unite man's spiritual nature to God in this life in a way that no other dispensation could pretend to do. All Christians admit this.

There are some, it is true, who claim the Christian name, and who deny that Christianity has any history, any facts, any ministry, any privileges, which would not equally belong to human nature whether the Incarnation had taken place or not. But clearly those who hold this position are not, in any adequate sense of the word, Christians. Among Christians proper there are two grand divisions. First, those who maintain, not only that Christ has done everything for man by satisfying for him and redeeming him, but that man himself need do nothing and can do nothing. This is the position of Luther and of Calvin. No matter what may be your sins, Christ has satisfied; do nothing but believe so. However corrupt your nature—and it is all corrupt—have no fear; you cannot be healed, but God overlooks your corruption for Christ's sake. Trouble not to bring forth fruits worthy of life everlasting; you cannot do it; and they are not required. This doctrine, which in its naked form is antinomianism too shocking to be explicitly held, in some shape or modification is the doctrine of all Protestantism; denying the possibility of spiritual regeneration or holiness, ignoring inward, sanctifying grace, making sinfulness perpetual, and destroying all personal merit. I do not say that all individual Pro-

testants hold it, or that they all agree as to the mode or degree of that clinging to Christ which is the only vestige of a personal exertion they admit. But there seems to be no possible doubt that it is this view of man's natural corruption, combined with Christ's all-sufficing merit, which constitutes the Protestantism of this country, of Germany, and of America. It lies somewhat out of sight, like the coal measures or the sandstone; the soil covers it, the trees grow, and the corn waves above it. But every now and again it comes to the surface; the waves of the ocean lay it bare, or the earthquake opens it out, or the act of man digs down to it; and there it is—solid, primitive, uncompromising. The other Christian theory is that of the Catholic Church. The Catholic teaching is, that although Christ did everything, yet man must do what lies in him; that our weakened and wounded nature can be healed by Christ's infused grace; that grace means the life and beauty of the soul; and that, by thoughts, words, and deeds done in grace, man truly merits life everlasting.

What I wish to do, then, is to present to you this Christian law in action; to show how the true follower of Jesus Christ is a doer of the Word, and not a hearer only.

For this great "law of liberty," if it exist at all, must be the greatest of the world's facts, next to the fact of the Incarnation. The Lord Jesus went up from Mount Olivet on Ascension Day, and we have Him no more in the flesh. But when He was taken from our sight, another form came down

from the heavens; a form of beauty, of brightness, and of power. She lighted upon the mountain top. I know not where that mountain is, but not on any Sinai where the lightnings blaze and the thunder rolls; not on any Carmel, which one race may possess, or where one prophet dwells; not on any Thabor where the glory is seen only to be lost again. She came down on that mountain which was prophesied of in the prophecy where it is said that the mountain of the house of the Lord in the last days should be on the top of mountains, and exalted above all hills (*Isaias* ii. 2 *seqq.*); a spiritual Sion far above every height that had as yet been known upon the earth; upon a Sion that was visible beyond the confines of Juda and of Israel, out into the vast world of every race and tongue. She was sent by that Jesus Who promised He would not leave us orphans, and she was the creation of that Spirit of Jesus Who shook the house upon the Day of Pentecost, and Who sent out into the streets the twelve men with the fire upon their brows. And her name was the Law of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her light streams from her lofty mountain upon all that there is in the world. Except so far as the malice of gainsayers hinders her, she makes herself felt on things little and things great—on intellect and work, upon men and their dealings with one another; on “all the tall and lofty cedars of Libanus, and upon all the oaks of Basan; and upon all the high mountains and all the elevated hills; and upon every high tower and every fenced wall; and upon the ships of Tharsis, and upon all that is fair to behold” (*Id.*, *ib.*, v. 13 *seqq.*). This

is the prophetic description of the effect of the Christian revelation in the world. The cedars of Libanus represent the men of genius of the human race. The lofty hills are the heights of human industry and achievement. The high towers are human pride—pride of race and pride of person. The ships of the great sea-ports are human interests of every kind. And the fair and beautiful things mean all human pleasure and delight. Christianity must touch and transform them all.

To understand and to see in detail how Christ's law must work in the world cannot fail to be of advantage to two orders of men—first to those who already accept it, in an adequate sense, and next to those who are yet in doubt and perhaps in perplexity. The ideas of Christianity which are current round about us, and in this country generally, are so inadequate that it is difficult to see how the ordinary Englishman would distinguish the law of Christ from the law of Moses. What has he—what does he pretend to have—which he might not have had before the Angel spoke to Blessed Mary? The Jewish ceremonial law is done away with; but that is the removal of a burden; and nothing seems to have taken its place. There is the book of the New Testament, and there are the words and example of Jesus. Far be it from us to undervalue priceless treasures like these; but writings and example, holy words, existed in the ancient law; the commandments were the same; the change is one of degree, not of kind; and the New Testament, with all its treasures, seems only a final chapter of the Old. A

non-Catholic church is, I will not say like the Jewish temple which crowned the heights of the holy city—for there is nothing in it half so solemn or imposing—but it is like some great portico of that temple, or like the synagogues scattered over the land. On certain days there is an assembly, there is reading, there is formal prayer. At other times there is an empty meeting house, gloomy and deserted—where no man would dream of entering for prayer's sake, for he would find there neither any Presence to attract his heart, nor any rite to bring down the grace of heaven upon his soul. No wonder that men say they can find God better in the fields, in the woods, on the mountains, on the sea—better anywhere than in the mournfulness of a church which is the home of an inadequate Christianity.

For let us lift our eyes to the mountain on the top of mountains, and see the law of the Lord, the new law of grace and truth, as she stands there for all the human centuries, throwing out the beams of her light. In her right hand she bears three lamps. They are the lamps which the fires of Pentecost first kindled. Nothing can extinguish them—neither force nor fraud, nor the storms of the elements. They have burnt on brightly through all the times which the world has seen since Christ went up to heaven; and they will be found burning when He shall come again in the clouds; for they belong to the essence of His divine revelation. They force men to look at them, as great facts always must do; and being looked at, they prove their own right to be, by

their own convincing light. They are the principles of true Christianity ; always the same, always living, and always visible to those who have eyes to see.

The first lamp is the lamp of Unity. When we begin to consider the matter, it seems incredible that any human intelligence can think Christianity real Christianity without unity. Let us make the largest admissions. Race differs from race, and century must differ from century. Among all the human millions there are hardly two units whose powers, faculties, nerves and tissues, infinitely subtle in their nature, are not also marvellously diverse in their make and in their operation. That very reason, which in all of us agrees so accurately in certain results, spreads out into a thousand theories, views, conjectures, and beliefs. We are trees of the same forest, rooted in the self-same soil, but every trunk has its branches, and there is not a straight line in all the luxuriance of their growth ; while the blossom varies in colour, the leaf in shape, and the fruit in savour. God made men as they are ; and to the end they will have, each race and each individual, their methods, their tastes, their power of achievement, and the defects of their incapacity and their prejudices. Even their religion will take the colour of their own natures and circumstances. But for all that there must be, and there is, a deep, real, and intelligible sense in which their religion must be one. They must agree as to who or what is Christ Himself. They must agree as to whether there is a Eucharistic Presence of Christ, with all the awful consequences of that Presence. They must agree whether

the religion of Christ is Sacramental or not ; for the difference between a religion with grace-conferring Sacraments, and all other ideas of religion, is the difference between the living creature and the stone. And, finally, they must agree as to whether or not there exists in the world a voice which can teach without error, and which can so prevent the Christian idea from going to pieces under the disintegrating force of human reason. I do not name at random, or because they constitute Catholic teaching, these points on which I assert that there must be unity if there would be Christianity. The mind, it seems to me, is forced upon them by its own laws. If Christ is God, that fact is so tremendous that those who think otherwise cannot, except in some wide and ineffectual sense, be Christians at all. If there is a Real Presence, with the Mass and its consequences, those who have missed that fact may call themselves what they please, but their religion is a different religion from ours. If there are Sacraments, in the Catholic sense, those who do not believe in Sacraments are outside in the cold and in the dark. If there is sure and certain teaching on the matters connected with the things named, those who hold a different view must necessarily also hold that Christians may disagree on God, the Incarnation, forgiveness, grace, life everlasting, and the punishment of sin, and yet be Christians still. Thus, first because the difference between the negative and the positive issues is so tremendous, and secondly because a want of agreement on special and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity makes those doctrines null, useless for man,

and a mere mockery—for these reasons there must be unity in that which professes itself to be Christianity, or Christianity it cannot be.

Next comes the Lamp of Grace. No dispensation which does not bring God and His Presence to the soul of man can be Christianity. Christ said with emphasis, speaking of this new law, “We”—that is, the Heavenly Father and Himself—“We will come to him and take up our abode with him”. This, let it be observed, has been true at every period of the history of the human race; men could always be saved, and always were saved—when they were saved—by that Presence of God, or union with God, which is called divine favour, divine indwelling, divine grace. But in Christianity, as our Lord’s words imply, this was to be a special effect of the law itself. There was to be something in that law which was to bring God near, to cause or produce union with Him. It was to be a spiritual law; the word “spiritual” meaning, not figurative, but that which truly affects the spiritual and immortal part of man’s nature; it was to be life-giving, the word “life” meaning spiritual life. It was to be perfect; that is, it was to effect in real truth that which in other dispensations was only effected in sign or symbol. Therefore, wherever true Christianity is found there must shine forth, bright and unmistakable, the light of the Lamp of Grace. There must be, first, a clear doctrine of nature, of sin, and of reconciliation. The human soul, which aspires to God, must be able to know in what state it came from the hands of God, and what has marred its

nature and weakened its faculties. Without this light man may take his present blindness and infirmity for God's doing ; he may despair of his nature, and leave it to root and wallow on the earth, hoping vaguely for salvation or destruction ; or he may be content and satisfied with it, as if it had no birthright to recover, no home beyond the skies to look for when his pilgrimage was done. Without this light he will not know where to look for reconciliation, for holiness, for merit unto life everlasting ; he will be ignorant of the way in which grace will come, and what it will do for this immortal soul of his. The consequence must be that without this light not only will the whole region of the spiritual life be dark to his steps—not only will these grand spiritual energies which all of us possess lie unawakened and useless—but there will come upon him the blight of that deadly heresy which teaches men to look on vice and virtue as the same, and, whilst outwardly conforming to restraints without which social intercourse would be impossible, to own within his heart no moral law at all. From this fatal poison of the spirit nothing can save the world but the true doctrines of creation, of sin, and of salvation. There must be an intelligible and consistent solution to the question, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” A question which, as it must be entertained under pain of spiritual self-murder, so it cannot be answered by a word, a phrase, or a cry, but only by the complete revealed code of Jesus Christ. And that code, as it must be an intelligible and consistent system, must be also practically and effectually applied to the soul of man. It

must be a visible power. It must do what Christ did Himself—take hold of poor sinners, gently force them on their knees, and there and then lift the guilt from their souls, making them clean and holy. For Christ did what all the ceremonies of the old law could not do ; He spoke, and His word effected what it said ; He raised His hand, and the chains of sin were broken. His law must do the same. This is what St. Paul meant when he said that to us were come, not the shadows of good things, but the good things themselves. Thus the Lamp of Grace must shine upon a system which is embodied and incorporated in acts. A visible Church must stand before the world, with her ministers, her temples, and her rites. She must have power over the application even of the Blood of Calvary itself : and this for the sake of men. Her ministers must have the keys and the shepherd's staff—symbols, but more than symbols, for this is the law of grace. Her ordinances when she uses common things, such as water, oil, and bread, must be much more than ceremonies—for the Levite had ceremonies. Her flock, when they approach her threshold and gather under her roof, must have ears to hear, but they must also look for healing from the touch of her hand. And more than this. Her altar is a real altar ; it has a real victim and a true sacrifice ; so much she has learnt from her founders and held from the beginning ; and as there is now no Victim possible but One, no sacrifice but the sacrifice of the Cross, therefore she must have the power to renew day by day that Sacrifice of all Sacrifices ; and the blood of Calvary, once for all shed,

must be applied to individual souls, as the generations pass, in large measure through the sacrifice of the Mass. Take all this away ; say that in Christianity there is neither the distinct teaching of sanctifying grace nor the sacramental dispensation of grace, and you have extinguished the Lamp of Grace ; but you have also got rid of Christianity itself. Do not reply that Christianity can come silently from God to every soul, without human teaching or human ministry. Absolutely speaking, this is true. But we are speaking of Christianity—a system which began by God's taking human nature and becoming visible and palpable ; which went on by the mission of men ; which is intended to reach humanity wherever humanity exists ; which takes humanity as it is ; and which has never faltered since its course began in maintaining before every generation that men must bow their heads to the Sacraments, must throng around the altar, and must both believe in spiritual gifts and firmly trust that, with due disposition, they receive them in visible ministration.

Finally, there is the Lamp of Sacrifice. It is of the essence of true Christianity that Christianity—the law of Christ Jesus—should claim from the men and women to whom she is sent their fullest devotion, their most complete spirit of sacrifice. Her mission is to change, to heal, to save. Her mission is to human nature—which has on the one hand aspirations to heaven, but, on the other, strong tendencies to earth. The law of Christ, with its splendid revelation and its magnificent gifts, must be either accepted or

rejected. If it is rejected, the soul that rejects it shrinks up and withers by that very rejection, and is only fit for the fire. If it is accepted, then it takes possession; and there is no power of the soul which must not be given up to it, no work of the hands which it may not claim, no wealth or possession of which it may not demand the sacrifice. A religion which does not claim sacrifice—yea, searching sacrifice, painful sacrifice—cannot be Christianity. A religion which does not profess to check the desires of human nature, to direct the heart, to lay down what is good and what is bad, cannot be Christianity. A religion which does not place its hands upon the intellect and, whilst guiding it to the highest things, forbid it to wander into religious error, plainly saying “thus far shalt thou go, and no further,” cannot be Christianity. A religion which does not demand a large share of our possessions, our labour, and our time, cannot be the law of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. And looking upon Christianity in its history and development, we must see that the Lamp of Sacrifice, which was lighted at Pentecost when Peter and the eleven took their lives in their hands and went down into the crowded streets to gain souls, has never been allowed to go out. True, at no period of the world has the Christian flock thoroughly lived up to their profession. But three things have always been true—first, that our Christian Law has consistently upheld its claim to the whole being of man, body and soul, heart and operation; secondly, that so complete has been the response, so considerable the result, that history, human institu-

tions, and the very surface of the earth, show in the most unmistakable way the effects of the presence of Christianity; and thirdly, that there have been in every age men and women who have shown the world, not an ordinary, but a most striking and heroic, example of sacrifice for Christ. Look back, and consider what men and women have given up merely in order to call themselves Christians. Look back—but also look at the very times in which we live—the lamp burns now as it ever burnt. There have always been martyrs; there have always been those who preferred Christ before wife and children, goods and good name. If our fathers sacrificed property, liberty, and life rather than deny their religion, we ourselves are witnesses that in this century, in this decade, at this hour, numbers of men and women have accepted the ruin of their earthly career, with the alienation of friends and the prospect of anxious poverty, for the sake of the word of Christ and His Sacraments. Nothing but true Christianity—Christ's own Christianity—can have inspired such a literal fulfilment as we see now and in all the past centuries, of that mysterious word of Christ, which bids His followers “hate” their lives in order to keep them, and “lose” them in order to find them.

And if the Lamp of Sacrifice has extended the bounds of the Church, observe how it has built her up and adorned her. The Christian priesthood alone would prove the divinity of Christianity. Since St. Paul gave his charge to Timothy and to Titus, there has been in existence a body of men—not a tribe or a

clan, but recruited year by year out of the multitude of the Christian flock—who have voluntarily put on a yoke and fetters in order to do Christ's service better. They deny themselves, and by their very garb proclaim to the world that they have taken up the obligation of self-denial. They accept restraints, rules, and times; and they give themselves to duties which, both in their preparation and their performance, are hard and exacting to the flesh and blood which they have as well as their fellow-men. But if the ministers of Christ show the way in self-sacrifice, the whole flock has followed. The mere fact that the flock maintains and supports the ministry is itself a proof of their devotion to the blessed law of Christ. In the earliest times they laid their property at the feet of the Apostles. When the dark days of blood came, they carried food and comfort into the catacombs and the dungeons. When the Roman empire was falling to pieces they enriched the Papacy and endowed the bishoprics. When the word of God by degrees overran Europe, they set up everywhere a priest of God and a church, and gave him his God's acre where he might bury the dead and frugally support himself. When centuries brought changes, and the old Church property was alienated, they again took of their own substance to maintain their priests, the rich diminishing their expenses in order to give largely, the poor giving of the pence of their daily earnings. Is it not divine, is it not of Christ, that not only in this country, but much more in Ireland, in America, and in Australia, so numerous a clergy, so great an estab-

lishment, should rest upon the daily contributions of the Christian flock? And think of the grandeur of Christian Churches—the beauty of Christian sanctuaries, the shrines, the robes, the gold and silver plate, the treasures of art which the religion of Christ accumulates from the devotion of those who believe in it! Imagine this country before the plunder began! Picture to yourselves—though it is very few who know how glorious it was—the splendour which surrounded the earthly Presence of Jesus in His Sacrament! Oh, my brethren, faith built those great cathedrals, faith raised those altars, faith lighted those lamps, faith offered those precious gifts. And faith did not stop within the walls of churches. The law of Christ urged men to think of all whom Christ loved; to think of the widow and the orphan, the poor, the sick, and the aged. It did this in the past, and if it is genuinely Christ's religion it does the same still; and the true follower of Jesus is he who will stint himself and deprive himself in order that a little child may be reared to the Faith and may be fed and cherished. The law of Christ has been the life of Christian charity. And it has been the mainspring of Christian missions. No one can be Christ's who does not make sacrifices for the souls, and also for the bodies, of those for whom Christ died. Christ's kingdom in this world cannot be built up without sacrifice. And so overflowing is the fountain of sacrifice that its streams water the whole of a Christian land. Laws, customs, public ceremonies, social intercourse, have impressed upon them the print of the law of Christ. Men give

up, and yield, and accept restraints, and mould their very legislation, their arrangements, and even their literature, with the view that Christ may conquer and Christ may reign. In no other way can the world be not only a hearer, but a doer of the Word.

And time fails me to dwell upon what it seems to me we may consider the chief example of all, of the law of sacrifice in Christianity. I will only say this: We have on the one hand the theory of the Evangelical counsels—poverty, chastity, and obedience; and on the other a continuous stream of heroes whom we call Saints. These facts are rays of a light which is more than any lamp of Christianity. They radiate from Christ Himself. He, Who might have had the whole earth, being the Sovereign God of earth and heaven, chose poverty, obedience, obscurity, and suffering. He chose them and He said, “Follow me!” Therefore they are of the essence of Christianity; not in the sense that every Christian must practise them beyond the law; but in this sense, that they must be upheld as the more perfect way, and that there must be at all times a not inconsiderable number of men and women who practise them heroically. No religion which excludes this theory and discourages this practice can be, in any adequate sense, Christianity; it has extinguished the Lamp of Sacrifice.

There are in this country a large number of God-fearing men and women who, whilst they do not belong to the Catholic Church, would do all in their power to advance the Christian cause, and to check that on-coming of Paganism or Atheism which is

one of the unmistakable features of the time. To these—and to you, my brethren—I would say with the greatest earnestness and conviction: No one can do much to serve Christianity who does not hold Christianity in its full and complete signification. You cannot build with a bad foundation. You cannot fight with a brittle sword. Partial Christianities can answer no deep questions and solve no pressing difficulties. Partial Christianities, made out by a sect or a preacher, or a commentator, or a private person, may attract attention for their ingenuity, their brilliancy of conjecture, or their evidence of good intention; but when they have to confront human nature they are simply swept away. The great stream of humanity may seem at times gentle and manageable, and well-meaning men may put up their slight bridges, erect their little breakwaters and moor their slender boats; but in a single night the rains pour upon the hills and the torrent rises till it roars, and all is carried away, except nature's barriers or the very strongest work of the art of man. Christ's Christianity has the mark of unity; Christ's Christianity explains what a man is, and how he can bring God into his soul, and how he can reach the heavens; Christ's Christianity touches him at every point of his being, and demands his correspondence. The light is there; it is yours to use it. Too many men—learned men, good men, simple men—sit as in the night, with the windows darkened and no lamps but those which men have lighted. No wonder they forget how wide a world is human nature; no wonder they cannot read even the brief

and scanty records of their own shut-up chamber ; no wonder they feel at times as if vital breath itself were difficult to draw. If they are wise they will spring up and burst their way out to the full Christian light ; if they are wise they will pray even for an earthquake to shatter their narrow walls and crush into dust all the useless ineffectual things they trifle with, and so give them back—homeless, perhaps, for a time and forlorn, but free at least—to the wide daylight of Christ's complete revelation.

XI.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP.

(Preached in the Cathedral, Middlesbrough, on occasion of the
Dedication of the Organ, Sunday, 15th September, 1889.)

“Let the Earth bless the Lord; let it praise and exalt Him
above all for ever.”—*Daniel* iii. 74.

THE voice of Praise is the Earth's answer to its Maker and Lord. He made it by His Word, and from the beginning His Word has been heard over its continents and its oceans, in the cities of its plains and on the solitudes of its mountain-tops. As each generation of men has appeared on its surface, the Word and the benediction of the Creator have never failed. For a time the very Second Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Word Himself, was incarnate among men; and all that sweet message and blessed hope which the world now had, as well as all that it has had from the beginning, is His speech or His prompting. The holy law, the divine utterances of the Prophets, the revelation of Mystery, the records of the Gospel, the oracles of the Apostles, the reverent developing ministry of the Church—this it is, taken as a whole, of which it is written in the Book of Wisdom, “The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth, and that which containeth all things”—the very boundary of

all this universe—"hath knowledge of the Voice" (*Wisdom* i. 7).

To this voice the Earth must find an answer. By it the Earth was made and is saved. Therefore she must answer. That is, the intelligent and reasoning Earth must answer. The soil and the plant and the beast do answer. They do not hear, yet they obey. They do not understand, yet they sing the praise of God. The great Earth rolls on her way, and as she whirls through the spaces, she magnifies the Lord Who holds her in the hollow of His hand. The forests shout together, and everything that springs upon the earth joins in the hymn to its Maker. The animals little and great, all the beasts of the field and the forest, bless Him in their unreasoning obedience. Sun and moon, fire, hail, snow, ice, and stormy winds fulfil His word. Light and darkness, mountains and seas, the heavens overhead and the dread abyss beneath—they magnify the Lord God Almighty.

But with man—intelligent, spiritual, free, and responsible—there is no such way of praising God. That he exists is nothing. That his mind is noble, his body wonderful, and his faculties sublime, is nothing. For he can understand, and can speak, and is free; and the Word, the divine Word, which has spoken its message from end to end of the world he lives in, must hear his answer from his reason and his will. He cannot answer by merely existing, or growing, or following blind instinct, like the creatures beneath him. He must speak; and to speak means to think, to aspire, and to will. Man's intelligent nature

must use its own characteristic faculties to answer the word of its Creator and Redeemer.

There are two senses in which it is possible for the heart and soul of man to praise God. One is by working for His glory; the other is by direct acts of worship and devotion. As to the first, I propose to say nothing; it is easy to understand that a spiritual creature only fulfils its duty by directing every one of its faculties and powers to the enlargement of God's kingdom and the spreading of the knowledge and service of its Maker.

What we are concerned with to-day is the direct response of praise and adoration; the lifting up of the heart, the pouring out of the soul, towards the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Worship, my brethren, is just that point in which our obligation to God cannot be proved by any human or earthly analogy. We may illustrate our duty of loving God by what we know of the love of man for man. We may explain the duty of sorrow for sin by what happens here below. We may be brought to see the reasonableness of asking Almighty God for His benefits and thanking Him for them, by ascending from the human to the divine. But no man is ever worshipped; even to praise a man, and the highest among men, is what has to be done very sparingly, and not at all in the sense of the word as referred to God. It is only the Infinite, the Almighty, and the All-holy that can be praised with the hymn of adequate worship.

But it is just this which makes it a duty. God is

the Infinite and the Perfect. If He were a mere irresistible force, we should not have to praise Him. But He is a Person, and can hear us and love us. If He were only an all-powerful Master, we might obey Him, but we could not be bound to worship Him. But He is infinite Love; He is the absolute rule of right and wrong (for all our instincts of right and wrong are faint copies of His nature); and He is infinite Knowledge and infinite Justice. The constitution of the human heart obliges it to worship a Being like this. For what is worship? It is made up of acknowledgment and love. To acknowledge with intelligent insight the infinite worthiness of the Creator is a clear duty, for it concerns us in every way; and there is nothing of any real interest to us but our Master, our Model, our Father, and our Last End. But where the reason points, there the affection follows. Acknowledgment, in beings constituted as we are, must lead to admiration, thanksgiving, and love; and it is the utterance of admiration, thanksgiving, and love which makes praise. The great God is our Rule, our Force, our Love; He is all this now, and will be so in ecstatic vision for all eternity. Therefore not to praise Him is to condemn our heart to starvation and death. Cold acknowledgment will not do. The man of the world may sometimes be heard to say, "I admit the greatness of the Creator; I admit it, and pass on". But He is your eternal bliss! He is your law of conduct! He is your strength in virtue! He is your only Friend and Father! He is all this, or there is no God. Therefore you must

prefer Him above all other things; you must centre your heart upon Him; and you must bless and thank Him. And this is, and must be, the noblest, the sweetest, the most reasonable, and the best rewarded occupation of your life. You must not even be content to say, "I will work for God, and do my duty in the world in which He has placed me". You can do more than work. You have faculties—you have a mind, will, and heart—which, after all your earthly work, still can aspire to something higher and greater. What are you going to give to your heart? Whom are you going to love? Whom to pray to? Whom to praise? Love and attachment and trust and devotion there must be. To give them to any created thing is to cheat yourself and to prepare for yourself the bitterest disappointment. Therefore you must give them to your God. There are great rivers which flow through vast continents for a thousand miles, and ere they reach the ocean which they seek, they lose themselves in swamps and flats, lying stagnant for many a mile; but others press right on to the sea, deep, swift, and straight, bearing ships on their waters and gladdening the hearts of men. Thus must the human spirit either waste itself on the earth, or raise itself to know and love and praise the earth's Maker and Lord.

Such is man's duty and happiness—to use his heart and mind to praise his Creator. But that Almighty Lord and Father, to Whom we owe this duty, from Whom we look for all our happiness, has deigned to teach us how to praise Him. We can read the lesson

in the Holy Scriptures and in the divinely-directed practice of the Church, and in the lives of holy men in every century. Holy Scripture is God's message to the world ; it contains His revelation and His law. But there is one book amongst its treasures which contains by excellence the answer of man to God—an answer dictated by the Holy Spirit Himself. This is the Book of Psalms.

The Book of Psalms is at once the divine warrant for man's dedicating his powers to the praise of God, and the divine exemplar of the way in which it is to be done. Its language is the language of emotion ; language which befits the presence of God, the solitude of contemplation, the temple of worship. Its language is poetry ; not the poetry of frigid conceit or artificial ornament, but the poetry of intense earnestness and rich fancy ; the poetry of one who sees the truth, and who seizes on every colour of the sky and every shadow of the night to embody the visions of life and eternity which pass and repass in his hours of communion with his God. It is the language of a heart which rises to every height, and has known every depth ; which is familiar with triumph, and yet has felt the cold grip of sadness and despair. But it is the speech of a soul to which God is the first and the last. To the singer of the Psalms, Jehova is God, and He is man's Maker ; the Lord is Shepherd, the Lord is King. The God of Israel is a strong, living God ; He is great, and exceedingly to be feared ; His Name is wonderful in the whole world. He loveth justice, and He searcheth hearts ; He is terrible, and who shall resist

Him? Yet His mercy is without measure; it endureth for ever; the earth is full of His goodness. The just cry, and the Lord hears them; He is nigh to the contrite of heart; He saveth the humble and the poor. The singer lifts his voice to the God Who he knows will hear him. He is needy and poor, contrite and sorrowful, smitten with infirmity, and hemmed round with many enemies. Sometimes he hopes, sometimes he fears; at one time he is glad at the things that are said to him, at another he cries out of the depths. He is by turns a child, a sheep of the pasture, a solitary sparrow on the housetop, a beast of the field, a beggar at the rich man's gate. He calls upon all his powers to praise his God; he begs for understanding; he lays his will and desire at His feet; he consecrates his memory; he is never weary of offering his whole heart. His soul and all that is within him must bless God's holy Name. He wishes for nothing on earth or in the heavens but God: God is his choice and his portion for ever. He longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. He calls on the hosts of the Angels to join him in his songs of worship; the Angels who in their tens of thousands surround and guard the Lord in Sion, in the holy place, in whose sight he stands and sings; the Angels mighty in power, who execute the word of the Most High. He calls on all the earth to sing and rejoice and be glad—the earth and all that there is therein; the heavens and the heaven of heavens; the sea, which is His own, for He made it, and the dry land, which His hands have formed. All creatures, all that is and lives, all that

moves and breathes ; the stars, the light, the seasons, and this mighty sun which rules them—he cries to them all to join their never-failing obedience to the mood and the act of his heart, to show forth the glory of God, and to utter His praise to each succeeding day. For the singer of the Psalms speaks for the universal human spirit ; and to that spirit God is Father and Master ; and no faculty is rightly employed but on Him, no word is wisely uttered which is not in praise of Him, no moment is well filled up except in magnifying Him, no creature has any purpose in its being except to show Him forth and glorify His Holy Name.

It is no wonder, then, that the Book of Psalms—called by the Hebrews the Book of Praise—has been the book of the believer's Prayer ever since it grew out of the hearts of holy David and of the Hebrew singers four thousand years ago and more. It was the Psalms that resounded in the splendid ritual of the Temple. When the singers stood in their order, and the musicians lifted up their horns and trumpets and struck their cymbals and their harps, it was the sonorous Hebrew of the great Psalms of worship that was the intelligent voice of that glorious ceremonial. It was the Psalms which the Israelite carried away with him into his home amid the rocks of Juda or the plains of Galilee ; he found in them his morning and his evening prayer, his petition for happiness and health and children, the history of his race and its triumphs, the prophecies of the Messias, the songs of his spiritual festivals and even of his seasons, and of

the joyful vintage, when the children chanted thanksgivings by the light of the harvest moon (*Psalms viii.*). In the Captivity, it was the thought of the Temple worship that chiefly filled with sadness the hearts of the exiles, when they hung their harps on the willows by the waters of Babylon, and refused to sing the songs of the Lord in the land of the stranger. And when the old Temple was gone, the Lord of the Temple Himself went up to the restored Temple of Herod and joined in the Psalms which He Himself had inspired—joined in them in public and in private. As He stood in the midst of His apostolic band and lifted His voice in the mysterious verses which spoke of Himself and of His Church to be, the old dispensation faded away, and those canticles which had before been unfulfilled and dark stood out as the hills stand out when the mists clear off—stood out as the song and the prayer of all those Christian centuries which were to roll on till the day when the world itself should be no more.

The Christian Church, constituted and organised by the coming of the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day, at first joined in the Psalmody of that Temple which now had no lawful sacrifice. The believers were found daily with one accord in the Temple (*Acts ii. 46*). But as their number grew they left the Temple. Then in hired lodgings, in the private houses of converts, in prisons, in catacombs, began to be heard the melodious preludes of that world-wide thunder of holy praise which has been and is to this day the mark of the Church of Christ. In the Christian life, from Apostolic times, the singing of Psalms superseded the lewd and

profane chants which had grown out of heathenism and impurity. The heart that was cheerful and felt the impulse to sing, was ordered by St. James to sing Psalms; in Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs they made melody in their hearts to God (*Col.* iii. 16). The Confessor and the Martyr, like the Hebrew of old, spoke their confession to God in the Psalms of David. The clergy, as they surrounded the Pontiff at the altar, prepared with Psalms for the solemn sacrifice of the New Law. The solitaries who, especially in the third and fourth centuries, crowded the deserts of the Nile and of Syria and the islands of the Mediterranean, met in companies to sing in common the Psalms of worship; and we read in the words of eye-witnesses how, at the signal for public prayer, the work was dropped, the cells deserted, contemplation and penance interrupted, and, as bees swarm back to the hive in the evening, the servants of God hurried in their scores and hundreds to the Church for the "work of God". Then, as the Church was settled in Europe and the great Monastic Order took shape and stability, the Psalmody was organised and arranged. The Patriarch of the Western Monks, St. Benedict, has left directions in his Rule which became the law for monks for a thousand years. In the hours of the night they rose to sing their Psalms; and seven times each day, in accordance with the inspired Psalmist's own practice, they gathered together to utter the praise of God. As they spread from place to place through Europe, their first care was to pay their daily task of sweet and solemn praise. They threw together the boughs of

trees or made a poor chapel of clay and boards; they stood in a glade of the woodland or under the shadow of inhospitable rocks; and there they sang the Psalms of their Matins and their Vespers. By toil and patience they cleared the land and built them a church and a cloister; and then arose the walls and arches and the high vaulted roofs of those grand monastic and cathedral choirs, which were the embodiment in stone of their faith and their fervour; choirs in which, for century after century, they never for a single day omitted, with solemn chant of Psalm and venerable rites, to praise the Lord and Master Who rules and governs all. The alms of a devoted and believing people had been given them for this; and surely the establishment of men to keep up the daily sacrifice of Praise is a good and most religious purpose. Modern indifference may call these cathedral clergy and monastic bodies idle and unprofitable. As for idleness—to rise early, to be long in church, to go to the church many times a day, to reverence God by posture of the body as in the sight of the Angels, and to chant loudly and roundly, as St. Bernard hath it, “not sparing the voice”—this may be unprofitable, but idleness or sloth it cannot be. And for profit—what is man made for?—why has he intelligence and affection, a reason and a heart, except chiefly to use them in the worship of his Maker? And what will better lift him up and fit him for the world to come? And what will draw the hearts of the multitude of men more effectively than the sight of holy ministers of God spending the hours

of mortal life as Angels might spend the spaces of eternity?

In the nineteenth chapter of the Apocalypse we read of a great scene of worship in the Heavens. Babylon had "fallen, fallen," and was found no more. An angel with strong and mighty voice has chanted that terrible and sublime elegy which describes her sins and her destruction. Then, like the response of an anthem, the sound of many voices is heard in heaven—"Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power is to our God. For true and just are His judgments. Alleluia!" And then the four and twenty ancients, seated round the throne—the type of the Angelic hierarchy ancient with ineffable duration—fall down and adore God; and they cry "Alleluia. Amen." Then a single voice is heard again: "Give praise to our God, all ye His servants, and you that fear Him, little and great". Finally, once more the crash and roar of the great multitude bursts forth, as the voice of many waters, as the voice of great thunders—"Alleluia! For the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned; let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him!" My brethren, this scene reveals the worship of Heaven; yet its outlines are of the earth, and it was on earth that the Prophet saw them. The earthly altar whence the Lamb of the Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered, the humble throne of the Pontiff, the presbyters seated around, the voice of the leader and the answer of the multitude—this is the scene reproduced in lines of glory in the Revelation. It is the moment when, in the Christian Church, the continual ritual of Praise

reaches its highest point. For the chant which accompanies the Mass is the most solemn portion of the Holy Liturgy. The Mass, at which we have the happiness this day of assisting, has always been essentially the same ; it has always consisted of the Offering, the Consecration, and the Communion ; and always have there been the singing of Psalms and the reading of Holy Scripture. In our own day, the first thing chanted is the anthem called the Introit, with one or two verses of a Psalm, which at one time was sung all through ; next we have the Gradual, sung after the Epistle, made up of verses from the Psalms, with sometimes a whole Psalm ; then the Offertory anthem, usually founded on the Psalms ; and finally the Communion anthem, of which the same may be said. These portions of the Mass are to be sung by the choir—or at least to be recited by the ministers, the organ meanwhile resounding. Besides these portions of psalmody, we have the solemn chant of the Kyrie eleison—the ancient litany of supplication ; the joyful “Gloria in excelsis” ; the grave and earnest “Credo” ; the angelic repetition of the “Sanctus,” “Holy, holy, holy” ; and the supplicating “Agnus Dei”. Thus the great action of the Sacrifice is accompanied by the chants of worship and praise. Each of these portions of the singing has its fixed and intelligible place. Each of them takes its significance from the great Act which it accompanies ; each is meant to prepare the heart, to lift up the soul, to dispose the whole being to love and worship. And each of them has a history, and the knowledge of that history helps towards their under-

standing and softens the heart with many associations.

It is no wonder, then, that the Church is profoundly solicitous as to the character and execution of the music which accompanies the Liturgy. The words are her own; nay, the words are in most cases the words of the Holy Spirit Himself. They are words directly connected with the most solemn worship. Therefore it is the words, and not the music, which are her first concern. To bring out those blessed words with befitting intelligence and meaning, the music must be grave, stately, sweet, and devotional. No associations of worldliness and frivolity must enter the Church. The Church's ministers are charged with this responsibility. The executants are responsible also. To sing the chant of the Mass is an act of belief, of reverence, and of worship. To make it a distraction to the people present, or an occasion for mere artistic display, is to insult the presence of God and the holy Angels who guard that Presence. "Sing ye wisely," said the Psalmist of old (*Ps. xlii. 8*). Let the meaning of those liturgical words be studied, and their connection with the Blessed Eucharist, and then the singing of the choir becomes for singers and for assistants alike a series of acts of devotion. How much is lost by not understanding better! Is there anything more touching than the words of the Liturgy on a great festival? What emotion is awakened when, on Christmas Day, after the words of St. Paul have been simply chanted by the sub-deacon, describing the prophetic announcements of Christ's coming, the whole

choir rise as the single voice dies away, and in sweet unison, with simple modulations, respond with that "Verbum caro factum est"—those lyrical strophes of Scriptural words more penetrating than any chorus of Greek tragedy? What does not the devout heart feel on Easter Sunday when the choir, as the ministers ascend to the altar, cry out together, "The Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; the Lord is great, and great His might"? or on Ascension Day, when the low sweet strains of the "Viri Galilæi"—angelic words—hush the people into attention as the solemn Mass begins? "Sing ye wisely." Let us try to understand. Life is too much occupied with other things to allow us to miss one single point of God's public worship, one syllable of His praise, one breath of that incense of piety which should be the very atmosphere of the Christian heart. "Sing ye wisely." No prayer is better than the liturgical prayer of the Church. Be glad and rejoice when means and resources allow the solemnities of divine worship to be fully carried out. A Christian can have no greater privilege than to join in that solemn worship of praise which is the prelude of the ecstatic praise of a blissful eternity. Leave off foolishness and malice, my brethren, turn from the pride of life, the heat of passion, the eager race for money; your life is passing away, and of all the things you fight for you can take nothing beyond the grave. But the Lord gathereth up your vows; your Maker treasureth your worship; your heavenly Father counteth every word of your praise; and these, like sheaves you have sent home from the harvest field,

will await you when the gate of eternity is lifted up and you must enter in.

May God, then, bless this Organ which to-day is set up to the glory of His holy Name. May it minister for many a year to devotion and to true worship, and draw the hearts of many nearer to God. In the sight of this altar and this Presence it stands, the work of skilful artists, waiting the touch of man's hand and the dictation of man's spirit. To God be all the glory, now and evermore, that, as we this day dedicate this instrument to His praise, so we may give our hearts as well, and consecrate all our powers to His love and service. You naturally rejoice and give thanks; and not only you, but every friendly inhabitant of this busy town. The presence to-day of the chief magistrate and of so many leading townsmen is a sign of goodwill and brotherhood which you are not likely soon to forget. But it is more than that; it is a sign and public recognition that the service of God is man's noblest occupation, and that our praise is His due and right every day of our lives. May all here learn to know Him better, to serve Him more faithfully, and to give the very best of their being, their powers, and their time to Him to Whom alone is glory for ever and ever!

XII

BROTHERLY LOVE.

(Preached at St. James's, Bootle, Sunday, July 29, 1894.)

“He hath done all things well; He hath both made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.”—*St. Mark vii.*

THIS miracle of the healing of the deaf and dumb is, as we know, only one of innumerable instances in which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ deigned to exert His divine power for the benefit of the afflicted. The acclamations of the people celebrated His beneficence. That cry of the multitude, “He hath done all things well,” recalls the songs of triumph with which the Jewish people, in the days of its glory, chanted the victories of a David or a Machabæus. For our Lord’s progress from the coast to the Lake of Galilee was as the advance of a King and Conqueror far more mighty than any judge or leader of Israel, or of any of those monarchs of Egypt or the East whose armies had struck terror through Syria and the Lebanon. The land was stirred up, and recognised a King. But it was a King who saved men, not destroyed them; who brought life and healing and mercy to all, instead of war, misery, and death. For Jesus Christ, having come to save the world by His Blood and His teaching, first took the world by storm as one who loved

mankind. And as the world first was drawn to Him by the sight of His mercy and compassion, so wherever His power and His spirit have penetrated since, His loving-kindness has always been His herald and His precursor. His preachers, His saints, and all His servants have learned the lesson, and have carried it out in every Christian generation—that the Kingdom of Heaven is the fellowship of brotherly love.

There is more than one kind of love, as there is more than one kind of pity and of kindness. Those august and sacred names are oftentimes misunderstood, misused, distorted, and degraded. But there is one rule which not only teaches us what is real brotherly love, but which gives us the whole reason and philosophy of the love of our neighbour. When our Lord laid down, or renewed, the great commandments, and gave the sovereign love of God as the first, He said that the second—to love our neighbour as ourselves—was “like unto the first”. What does this mean? It means that Christian brotherly love is only an extension, an amplification, of the love of God, and that to love one’s neighbour truly is to love Him, *because* God loves him and *as* God loves him.

What are men and women? They populate the world in their multitudes; they carry on in their races and commonwealths the manifold life of the world and its ceaseless movement; they have succeeded each other in their generations since the beginning, and the generations will follow on until the end. What are they in the eyes of God? I know what I am myself. I am a spiritual, immortal soul, loved

without cessation by Him Who made me and redeemed me, and intended by Him for an eternity of inconceivable happiness. But what more—and what less—is every unit of the human race? Each of them is a spirit with immortal destinies; each is the beloved creature and child of the Heavenly Father; each was in the Heart of Jesus upon the Cross; each shares in the solicitude of the Holy Spirit; and in regard to each the dearest object of the Infinite God is its everlasting happiness. This is how God looks upon men. And this being so, I have my lesson. I am to take God's view. I am to take God's view because He is the Absolute; He is my Lord and Master and Teacher; and I cannot give Him a better proof of my love for Him than by conforming my mind and heart to His supreme wisdom. If I love Him I must promote His work. If He has thus made men, and thus aspires to gather them to Himself, I must do all that lies in my power to second Him. Whether it be much or whether it be little, my poor exertion must be marshalled under His banner, and my labour must go to the increase and prosperity of the kingdom which He means to set up here on earth, as a preparation for the eternal Kingdom. It may be that I am drawn to my fellow-beings in ways natural and ways rational; and it may be that in some of these ways I am repelled from them. In this natural feeling there may be much that is good, innocent, even holy. But it is certain that, after the supernatural revelation of God's purposes, neither nature nor merely rational reflection can give us adequate motives

for loving our fellow-men. The instinct of the parent, fostered and developed by civilisation, is not a sufficient guide to the father's or the mother's solicitude for the child. The congeniality of friendship may bind heart to heart, but it has to be supplemented by something else. The sight of human goodness or greatness is not, by itself, a safe guide to dealing with the men whom we admire. Even misery and suffering are not the full explanation or justification of brotherly kindness; and when we say that we are born to do good to our fellow-creatures because we love to see them happy and content, the answer is far from being full and complete. There is no key to the problem except in the revelation of an eternal destiny, and of supernatural means to attain that destiny. If God has built the New Jerusalem, and has levelled the hills and filled up the valleys for human nature to reach it, badly indeed would short-sighted mortals be advised if they tried to keep their fellow-men, even under the pretence of kindness, groping in the trackless desert, or standing still even in the pleasantest places of this earth. Can there be any greater love than to help souls to their heavenly inheritance? Can the heart's affection for its God ever hesitate for one instant in imitating the workings of infinite wisdom and infinite compassion? Is there any possible view of the human race so wide, so lofty, and so complete as that which sees in all the multitudes of all generations the flock whom God through Christ perpetually doth shepherd in the pastures of the earth until the wilderness shall pass away and the paradise of the Father shall be revealed?

But let us not misunderstand God's ways. The revelation of heaven has not abolished the earth. Grace is not intended to kill and slay human nature. Supernatural views and supernatural virtues are not like the hot wind of the desert, which blights and shrivels up the tender grass of the field and the humble flower of the wayside. They are rather as the rain and the dew of the heavens, which make even the most barren of this world's desert places blossom and rejoice. The father's love, the mother's love,—from whom does it come except from the same overflowing Source whence flow the most sublime gifts of the Spirit? Had there been no revelation—no supernatural destiny—the natural love which binds a family together would still have been a virtue dear to the heavenly Father. No lifting up of humanity, no preaching of more perfect law, can abrogate parental love or make it anything but a duty. All that redemption has done is to transfigure it. The house which holds the family stands rooted where it has stood from the creation; but now there rests upon it the halo of the holy House of Nazareth. This is true, also, of the State, and of the whole race. There are instincts in the heart which make a man love his country, and which fill his breast with lawful pride in her history or her position, whilst they inspire him with self-sacrifice for her sake. Let the heart of the patriot be sure that the law of Jesus, though it has interfered with the pagan ideal of the state, gives him ample scope to cherish his country and to love his countrymen in a purer and a holier atmosphere. And

no man need narrow his love to the boundaries of his own people or to his fellow-citizens. There are minds among us which burn to do good to the universal human race. There are noble hearts which aspire to—which sometimes dream of, but no matter for that!—the raising, educating, refining, and benefiting of the whole race of men; the adding to their pleasures and diminishing their pain, the subduing of disease and suffering, and even the changing of nature herself. Let the philanthropist labour on. The Gospel need not chill his ardour nor discourage his hopes. The Gospel only completes and rounds off his eager schemes. There may be one or two principles and maxims on which she has at times to insist against short-sighted human views. No ideal is adequate except God's own. But the Gospel loves and cherishes the man who loves his fellow-men. The Gospel will nerve him to his work—encourage him in his thankless labour—help him to go on without applause in the midst of hostile surroundings. The Gospel leads him to the haunts of poverty, the beds of sickness, the doors of prisons. The Gospel leads him where human lives are pressed on heavily by man or by nature, and clasps her hands in supplication that he would find treasure to spend, urge workers to work, and wring from science her secrets, in order that God's children may be delivered from the bitterness of a lot which their heavenly Father never intended to be theirs. Nay, more than this. The law of Christ is, that where works of corporal mercy are of pressing urgency, they take precedence even of spiritual needs. When a human being

is destitute, you must relieve his misery before you think of his spiritual state. You must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and comfort the afflicted, wherever you meet them and whoever they may be. Even were they the open and pronounced enemies of your heavenly Father, you must not hesitate. He maketh His sun to shine upon the unjust as well as the just; and it is according to His law. The instincts and emotions of human kindness are therefore divine. They are implanted in our breasts by Him Who made our nature. They are not in all circumstances infallible; they must, sometimes, be corrected and enlarged by a higher law; and they need a higher sanctification than is given by natural endowment. But they are true, good, praiseworthy, even holy; because they are from God, and are intended, like the rest of the things God has made, to make this world an effective preparation for the world to come.

Thus we have clearly before our minds the fundamental and elementary principle of brotherly love—that a man's soul is better worth saving than his body, but that in practical matters the law of God is that the body be ministered to first in all reasonable and necessary ministration. It will be useful if we now proceed to consider those rules of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on which brotherly love should be practised. We shall thus be able to enter into ourselves, and to see how far we are imitating our Lord, and how far we are from following His most blessed example. We shall also, perhaps, obtain some light on those

discussions regarding the whole subject of human kindness to one another which are so common at the present moment.

The first, the chief, word of direction that is vouchsafed to us, is one that resounds through the entire Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ came for the sake of men; but He did not come to put mankind in the place of Himself. Moreover, He came to give such a novel significance to the ancient command of brotherly love, that He justly called it a new commandment; but this very novelty was seen chiefly in this—that men were to love one another as He had loved them (*John* xiii. 34); and that whatever good they did to each other He looked upon it as done to Himself.

No man can ever seize Christ's principles of doing good to men, unless he puts Christ where Christ put Himself—first. No man is qualified to quote the Sermon on the Mount, or to enlarge on the kind-heartedness of Jesus, unless he well understands that duty to God and to Christ takes precedence of duty even to the poor. It is true these duties do not clash. But in all moral and spiritual work it is the element of mental direction and supernatural elevation which gives value to the acts of the being. There are those amongst us who care not what are the motives of beneficent work, provided humanity is succoured and the world's conditions made better. But no Christian can assent to such a view. Therefore, from the beginning, the follower of Christ has been taught to see Christ in the poor and the needy. The

Church has always put aside a substantial part of her revenues for the poor, because to her the poor represented her Lord and Master. The monk, in his Rule, receives the poor man who knocketh at the door even as Christ. The Bishop washes the feet of the poor to make some return to Christ for having washed the feet of the first pastors. Kings and queens who believed in the Gospel have fed the poor at their tables and ministered to them, seeing well, in their intelligence of Christ's word, Who it was that all the time received their pious duty. Saints have kissed the feet of the poor, and pressed their lips with burning countenance upon their wounds, because they realised the vivid presence of their crucified Lord. This is the spirit of the Gospel. Extinguish that spirit, and you may comfort men and women by your charitable work, but it will not draw either you or them any nearer to God.

And let us observe that our Lord not only puts before us Himself as the end and purpose of Christian charity, but also insists in the strongest words—Himself and His inspired servants—on its intimate connection with the supreme and final end for which man exists—*viz.*, the love of God above all things. He makes it clear that the love of God does not exist without love of one another. It was to be the very mark by which His disciples were to be recognised—that they loved one another. By this they were to be sure they had passed from the darkness and falsehood of sin and error to the light and the truth of redemption. There are two great ideas at the root of this

teaching. The first is, that the love of God in a man's heart is demonstrated, and, as it were, certified by kindness to men. For it is very easy for a man to deceive himself as to his real love of God unless he translates his spiritual affections into deeds. What passes for real love of the Heavenly Father may easily be only sentiment, or vacuity, or even sloth and self-seeking. Many a one knows the danger of this in himself, and suspects it in other people. What visions of devotion, what scenes of heroism, what deep and beautiful thoughts of heaven, sometimes float before the idle contemplation of a thoroughly selfish man! But rouse him—touch him with the spear's tip of the Angel—and his airy fancies vanish like smoke, and nothing is left but the noisome sight of self crawling off to hide itself. The best of men want a touch of this kind—not once, but every day. And this is what brotherly love does. That great commandment stands over you and me, my brethren. It says, Do something, or do not pretend you love God! Try to do some good, or your piety is a sham! Open your purse, or do not flatter yourself that you are a man of prayer! Take an interest in human trouble and suffering, or the Church services you enjoy so much will not bring you any nearer to Heaven! Be kind, considerate, gentle, and helpful to those in your home and your circle, or the largest number of the most devout prayer-books will be no shield at the judgment, no rampart in the day of visitation!

The other grand idea of the New Testament teaching is, that by the coming of Christ men are all one

body, with the same spirit and with identical interests. "In one spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free" (1 *Cor.* xii. 13). So that every unit is the concern of every other unit. The rules of kindness are meant to be more than the guides for a man's private conscience. They are intended to be the laws of society, because they are a part of the teachings of a society—*viz.*, the Church—whose work and mission is to teach all society, and to interfere in every human combination.

Thus the follower of Jesus Christ, as he becomes aware of the hardships and the misery of human life, not only recognises that he must gird himself up to alleviate these things in the name of his Master and for his Master's sake, but feels that he cannot pretend to be His follower unless he does imitate His mercy and compassion—nay, that he cannot claim to love God unless he also loves his neighbour. Filled with these grand views, he finds himself a member of a great organisation, to which the same fertile principles have been committed by her Founder. Thus he is a soldier who carries his own spear and shield, but at the same time marches in the ranks of an army. On all the great questions of practical beneficence his leaders have teaching for him. As each generation waxes and wanes—as fresh circumstances develop and fresh needs arise—the precious words of the Sermon on the Mount must be interpreted in the language which the age understands. They must not be left to the pitiful rhetoric and the discordant sciolism of men without the faith of Christ. The putting before the

world of Christ's teaching must not be fragmentary, sentimental, or interjectional; but full, adequate, and scientific. It is here that the Church helps the private soldier of brotherly love. In the unbroken and constantly lengthening-out traditions of her Moral Theology she weaves the wool of natural ethics with the golden thread of the Gospel teaching. In the unceasing utterance of her living Word she speaks to the time—to the day and the moment. And when the occasion demands it, her Pontiffs address the world in tones more measured and more stately; and, as in the Encyclical of 1891 "On the Condition of Labour," they assume the robe of the great High Priesthood; they sit in the chair of Moses; they impose upon a wondering universe the Christian view of the world's actual state; they draw forth from the ancient treasure-house things old as the Beatitudes and things new as the latest proclamations of social science, and they plead with that accent of faith which the adversary will lose his time in trying to gainsay.

These reflections easily lead us one step further. If Christian brotherly love always places Christ first and sees Him in every one around, it follows that the exercise of charity to others must be, for those who practise it, a spiritual discipline of the first moment. In other words, this divine precept, this commandment of our Lord's predilection, must be, in the most excellent sense, a means for leading our own souls to God. Recall some histories of the Saints. St. Vincent de Paul worked with his galley-slaves; he haunted, like a good angel, the hospitals built through his own ex-

ertions; he picked up the poor little exposed children; he fed whole provinces where war and disease had left destitution the most terrible. But look at him at his meditation. Take notice of his ardour and his devotion, of his long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. Were the two things disconnected? If God's love is as a fire, then deeds done for men are what the fire is fed by. Hearts even of small capacity such as ours, kindle such flames as they attain to by kind acts; but heroic souls burn like the conflagration which sweeps up the side of the mountain and blazes with the trees of the forest. Behold St. Peter Claver alone with a poor negro whom no one else will go near. He kneels to him, kisses his repulsiveness with tender affection, hears his confession, and pours out consolation till he dies. Look at him again helping his poor blacks to prepare a hut for the administration of the Holy Viaticum; how he sweeps and cleans and arranges; how he has a piece of silk to put down upon the poor bed; how he places lights and flowers; how he burns fragrant gums and herbs. And this man is so constantly in God's presence that his superior says of him, "I have never been able to tell the moment when Father Claver finished his prayer"; a man whom his brethren would find in his room suspended in the air and surrounded with miraculous brightness. Or think of S. Camillus de Lellis, during that terrible Roman winter of 1590—a winter of famine and of plague, following on war—when men, women, and children were dying in every street; see him hastening along with food and medicines, nursing the sick,

assisting the agonising, crowding his own convent with the sufferers, giving them often the last morsel of bread and the last sixpence of the community. Of that man the very Angels seemed to be jealous ; St. Philip Neri saw them standing at death-beds beside him and helping his religious. The image of the Crucified detached its arms when once he was discouraged, and said, "Why weepest thou? Trust in me!" These examples all point in one direction. Do they in any way explain the absence of fervour, the lack of divine fire, in the lives of so many men—in the lives of so many of ourselves? Is it want of kindness, want of love of the poor, that perhaps accounts for my own tepid love of my God? Is my prayer barren because I do not pity? Is my meditation so distracted because I refuse to trouble myself about the friends of Jesus? Is my faith so weak and slack because I am stingy and selfish? Is my soul so destitute of primary virtues—such as humility, patience, and self-restraint—because I have not been to the school where these virtues are learned—the school which Jesus founded when He said, "Love one another"? And why do we sigh so little after Heaven and the vision of God (thus preparing a long purgatory for ourselves), except because we are blighted with earthly selfishness, and worship comfort, and shrink from coming near the sight or the sound of the want or the suffering of our fellow-creatures?

In order, therefore, to love our neighbour as Jesus would have us love him, we have to love him in Jesus and for Jesus; we must love him as God loves him;

we must love him (if it be possible) as a member of the blessed Christian brotherhood; and we must look upon the work of brotherly love as a divine discipline for growing better men and drawing nearer to Christ.

We will suppose, therefore, that the follower of Jesus Christ is touched with the fire of his Master's Heart, and longs to take some share in its enkindling. The earth is before him—the earth with its souls, for which Jesus is longing. He may not be a priest, but he is not the less an apostle and an evangelist—simply because he loves his Master, and feels, therefore, the “constraint” of promoting his Master's interest. The earth is before him. There are regions of it which he cannot aspire to reach. There are races of men whom he must give up thinking of helping, except by his prayers and his alms. But quite close to himself there cannot fail to be enough, and more than enough, of those souls redeemed by Christ which he can help to draw nearer to Christ. He has a country and a home. He has, perhaps, a family, and relatives of various degrees of kindred. He has means, money, office or other influence, which extend the efficacy of his help beyond the bounds of his own hearth or his daily business. And he has the organisation of religion—his parish, his diocese, and the Church at large. Every man has many circles. The boundary of the outer circle may be dim and hardly realisable. But there are others clearly marked, in some of which his most strenuous work is peremptorily required. The word “neighbour” begins with those of

our own household, for it only means those who are near at hand. It extends to every man, woman, and child with whom our life brings us, or ought to bring us, in contact, by word or deed, by acquaintance or dealing, by business or pleasure, by office or duty. For these souls we are responsible in proportion as we come into touch with each of them—responsible to the God Who made them and the Saviour Who redeemed them. To these souls we are to be the means, in various degrees, of their coming to the Kingdom of God. The harvest is ready, and the fields are white. If we are not with Him, we are against Him. His friends are those who remain with Him in His labours and His loving sacrifice.

The first counsel I would give to a man who wanted to love his neighbour for God's sake and Christ's, would be, to make use of his faculties and of his intelligence to understand how best to do it. In brotherly love, almost more than in anything else, virtue means the use of the mind as well as of the heart. And it is not merely that we should thoroughly enter into the grand Christian view of love and union spoken of already; or that we should bring our judgment to bear on those cases which come before us. This last is, no doubt, necessary; but to my mind it is of the lowest order of necessity. It is better, perhaps, not to be taken in; and it is also true that indiscriminate almsgiving does harm, first to the recipients, and next to the community at large. But a man must be very foolish indeed to do any very considerable mischief on either of these heads. It is better to be taken in

sometimes, than to refuse those who are really in want. It is not especially here, then, that I would insist on the use of the judgment. The use of the best faculties a man can possess is required for another and a deeper purpose. It is required in order to help a neighbour with real help, and not with help that never reaches him or touches him.

It is easy to drop a coin into the outstretched palm. That is the simplest form of Christian help. It is easy to know what the importunate beggar wants. But neither Christ's Kingdom nor the social regeneration of the world will be promoted by these elementary modes of brotherly love. The triumph of the science of kindness is to understand the cry of the silent hearts of those who either cannot or will not speak. Your child is growing up at your knee, and unless you use your mind and consider, you will not understand one-twentieth part of the help he wants. Your brothers or sisters meet you day by day, bearing their histories in their hearts, carrying their burdens on their backs. You may help them—but, unless you are careful, you may hurt them and damage them. Your thoughtless jest, your idle tale, your loud and misplaced remarks—these are often to the hearts around us stabs or blows, or a stumbling-block. Sometimes your feeling is kind and your intention truly charitable; and yet you do not know how to reach your brother's heart, and he recoils from your efforts to help him. Sometimes your own selfishness is to blame; and you do not take the trouble to realise how badly your neighbour wants

your help, and how earnestly he is longing for it, or how much more he is to be compassionated than you are, with all your fancied troubles. Oh for the great Christian grace to put ourselves in others' places! This is the grand element of that Christian "altruism" which the Gospel enforces. It begins with our transforming our own heart into the likeness of the Heart of Christ. That heart is the precious object of our love, of our worship here and hereafter. But it brings with it a whole universe besides itself. It brings the hearts of the whole human race; the hearts of all men and women, with their histories, their good, their evil, their joys, their sorrows. All these has Jesus taken into His heart from the beginning. All these He had in His Heart at Gethsemane and on the Cross. No one of His friends can take that Heart into their own bosom without taking at the same time all that it holds and carries. Therefore, from the moment when that Heart begins to grow, strongly, really, and sensibly within us, we begin to have all human beings in our heart. We begin to find it easier to enter into their lot, whatever it may be, to sympathise with them, to understand how in this or that they must rejoice or must suffer, and to comprehend what a live drama, what interests, what stakes, what catastrophes, are being acted out close at hand, even under the mask of everyday faces and everyday circumstances. This is that "enlargement" of the human heart of which St. Paul speaks (2 *Cor.* vi. 2). No Christian brotherly love is possible without it. You cannot love those whom you do not care for. The Roman of old passed

through his stately halls, and was carried over his broad fields; and as his servants swarmed around him, near his person and at a distance, all ministering to his wants, he viewed them as the dust beneath his feet; to him neither their souls nor their bodies were of any account; at night they were swept into their *ergastula* like cattle, and at death flung into the fire. And it was the social revolution which Christian brotherhood wrought that made this kind of servitude impossible, and that indirectly sapped the very foundations of the Roman civilisation. You cannot love those whom you do not care for. What is it that makes you refuse to become acquainted with the poor or the suffering? Is it fastidiousness? Then trample it down, and take yourselves to poor bedsides, and approach where wretchedness is. For you will there find brothers and sisters. Is it thoughtlessness? Then, in heaven's name, begin to think! For you are not only repudiating Christ, but you are making it dangerous for the whole social order. Whether you think or not, there the things are; there is poverty, disease, and discontent. You may shut your eyes, but that will not conjure them away. But shut them not! Look before you, and advance to find out with complete knowledge all that reality has to show you. Shirk nothing. Make no pretences. Look unpleasantness in the face. If you need not go into the slums of great cities, at least be acquainted with your own neighbourhood. Be not a stranger to want and sickness. Visit the poor man out of work, the weak and overtasked mother, the poor neglected children. Find

out the shy and shamefaced victims of poverty, who lead a life of starvation. It is not the priest only whose office it is to know these things. It is the duty also of all of us, according to a certain rule of prudence and obedience. One effect of the knowledge, at first hand, of the dark and suffering side of human existence, will be, to make every one of us more ready and better prepared to enter into and to support schemes, large or small, for the alleviation of poverty and for fighting with disease. As to such schemes, no doubt they are sometimes foolish, and nearly always contain some drawback—in their authors, their advocates, or their conditions. But, disagreeable as these things are, counsel must be taken, plans must be planned, measures must be carried through; or else we, to whose charge God has given the poor (I mean all of us, seculars and clergy alike), will fail in our duty. Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the poor and the needy (*Ps.* xl. 2)!

We may now pass on to consider briefly, how the hand of the Christian may best execute what the Gospel and his own heart inspire, and what his intelligence sees to be needful.

I have always considered that the grand practical rule of brotherly love is to find your neighbours in your own neighbourhood. It seems a mere jingle of words, but it is not so. True, your neighbours are there, about you, whether you attend to them or not. But unless you yourself act as a neighbour, your neighbours are no neighbours at all. When the poor man in the Gospel is passed by of the priest and levite, and

tended by the Good Samaritan, our Lord asks the question, Who was the neighbour of that wounded man? You would have expected to hear Him ask, Who was the priest's neighbour, or the levite's neighbour—who but he who was in such distress? But no. The injured man was close by—but he was no neighbour, in our Lord's sense, till he was made one. The Samaritan alone was *his* neighbour, because he helped him. It is thus all the world over, in every generation. Too many of us have surroundings, but no neighbours. We have men and women near us, but who are not much more to us than the houses they live in, or the trees which grow at their doors. The reason of this is, too often, that we are wretchedly deficient in that Christian character of heart and mind already described. But it not unfrequently happens that we are led, by a fatal vagueness and want of practical spirit, to overlook our own neighbourhood. It is a common object of satire—the solicitude of a foolish man for the interests of far-off races, whilst he lets the poor die and the ailing suffer at his own door. The picture is only too real.

There cannot be a doubt that the first and foremost field of Christian brotherly love lies—I will not say at our own door, but inside our own door. I mean, it lies in the house and family in which we live. Can the father love his fellow-men if he neglect his wife or his children? Can the mother be a follower of Christ in His loving-kindness if she falls short in those works—works of mercy spiritual—which she is bound to practise towards her little

ones—instructing, forming, loving, and correcting them? What sort of a Christian is the member of a household who reserves his smiles and sympathy for outside, and has nothing but selfishness, sourness, and evil temper for those who live with him every day? The unkindness to one another of members of a family is often a scandal and a disgrace. But it is much more than that. It is a curse. Unkindness causes aversion, misery, and unhappiness—sometimes grievous sin, separation, eternal ruin. The members of a family are meant to save each other's souls. They are meant to think for one another and to bear with one another. Near relations and close acquaintances, whether they live under the same roof or not, are weighted with nothing less than an apostleship one to another. Not the apostleship which preaches or argues—although these things may at times be needful. But the apostleship of self-sacrifice. This apostleship, so fruitful in results for the Kingdom of God, rests on humility, on considerateness, on self-restraint, and on devotedness. First, it thinks humbly of itself, refers all to God, and refrains from judging or depreciating others; then it has the keen insight of the Heart of Jesus into another's wants and troubles; then it represses in itself all that can hurt or annoy—even innocent peculiarities and personal habits; and, lastly, it is ready even to lay down life for its friends. What is this but true chivalry, true courtesy, the truly gentle life? Not the spirit of what is called by these names in the world,—a spirit which is outwardly all smiles and attention, but which is really cold,

sneering, fastidious, and contemptuous ; but rather the spirit of the Holy House of Nazareth, which is found alike in the houses of the poor and the houses of the rich, if the spirit of Jesus be there ; a spirit which gives to the poor and the toiling a refinement which is perfectly real and genuine, however humble may be their condition ; and which adds to the life of the well-to-do that infusion of Christian kindness which neither money nor fine clothes nor handsome houses can ever bring or bestow.

As I have said, these exhibitions of Christ's spirit, although they are never more obligatory than at home need not be confined within our own doors. The rich have their servants and employés. Let them remember they have a duty to them in times of need. Especially let Christian women seek out the mothers and the children. As for the poor, we know how the poor always help the poor. The Sister of Charity, gliding like an angel from street to street on her mission of mercy, how often does she find that the poor neighbours have been beforehand with her, and that those who themselves are badly enough off, have brought something to keep off starvation, have smoothed the pillow of sickness, or have cheered the desolation of the desolate ? May God reward them !

Thus does it come to pass that a man or a woman finds neighbours in his or her own neighbourhood. And thus may we at once sanctify ourselves by demonstrating our love of God, and do what lies in us to diminish the world's miseries.

But, my brethren, there is something more. In all

the Christian ages it has been the practice to form societies or associations, to carry out with more efficacy the great principles of Christian love. These associations have always been more or less under the management or influence of the Church. For the Church is the grand philanthropic society of the world. The poor are the "family" of her Bishops and of her priests. Whatever belongs to the alleviation of poverty, sickness, or ignorance, is connected with the office of that Church to which has been committed the pastoral charge of Christ's sheep and lambs. In the days of the Apostles the institution of the diaconate owes its origin to her solicitude for the poor. During the persecutions, societies of various kinds visited the confessors in prison, attended them at the tribunal, and collected their relics for burial. In great cities like Rome, Antioch, and Constantinople, the Bishop had his lists of poor, and of orphans, and of sick, and they were relieved and fed by a most carefully worked organisation. By degrees the religious orders took these things up, and innumerable institutes of charity have sprung into existence, in which men vow themselves to help their neighbours. But I do not now speak of religious. I am speaking of the laity; of men and women who live and work in the world, and yet wish to save their own souls by the practice of the spirit of Christ. It seems to me that the laity should be ready, not only to be charitable, but to enter into charitable organisations. It is not my purpose to name or recommend any; but I will ask you to consider the spiritual benefits of such a society as a priest

may found and manage in his own parish, or such as that of St. Vincent de Paul. There are three elements of virtue in one or all of which human nature too often fails. The first is steadiness, the second is purity of motive, and the third is fervour. A Christian layman who serves in an association, takes an admirable means to keep himself steady to his duty. Conscience is a sufficient stimulant with some; but with others, the aids to conscience which come in the shape of notices, admonitions, meetings, and reports are extremely helpful. Then, the man who works in a society hides his own hand; self-complacency has access to him with difficulty; and his kind work is done without personal ostentation, in the way he is directed. Finally, association suppresses and subordinates self, and is therefore a true mortification; for it is a mortification to obey, to act on a rule, to keep in the background, and to suffer correction. But this is the very fuel of fervour. These things intensify the heart's love of God. These things imitate the Cross, the source of all good things; and it is by these things, therefore, that the Kingdom of Christ is advanced in the world.

As for larger societies—societies which profess to bring a remedy to poverty and disease by looking to the very roots of society—it is not possible for me to discuss them in this place. There are some existing ones which are communistic—that is, which are grounded on the denial of the idea of property, and which would therefore lead to evils a hundred times more acute than those they undertake to cure. There are others

which are socialistic—that is, which expect the State to do more than the State can easily do, or has any right to do; these, too, would lead to evil. There are others, again, which are advocated by men who have no Christian faith. Now, the Christian faith, as far as we are here concerned with it, contains these three elements: first, that the service of man ought primarily to be the service of God; secondly, that poverty and pain, evil as they are, are only temporal evils, and may be converted by patience into eternal reward; and, finally, that interior submission and resignation are far more important than exemption from suffering. These principles the modern philanthropist too often disbelieves and contradicts. He preaches the love of humanity merely for humanity's sake. He talks loudly of the holiness of discontent. He blames God himself, so far as he believes there is a God, for the existence of evil; and he affects to deplore that, after nineteen centuries, the proclamation of Christ has resulted in a failure, as there is practically no Christianity yet in the world. It is no wonder if Catholics object to join in efforts to regenerate the world with men who thus blaspheme. We differ from them by the whole width of the heavens. They would work for the body alone; we chiefly for the soul. They have no future life in view; with us, the idea of eternity colours everything. They have no place in their schemes for religion, faith, humility, obedience, resignation, or the love of Christ; to us those things come first, and the direct sufferings of this earth are really no evils at all in comparison with the loss of

Christian virtue and the sacrifice of heaven hereafter. Such men, and their principles and their societies, we would let alone if we could. They may feed and clothe the body, they may bring up a race of men and women fitted and prepared for making their way in this world, but they are the enemies of Christianity. We cannot always ignore them, any more than we can always pass by the philanthropic efforts of our Protestant friends, who would make faith give way to food. Therefore, there is no more genuine work of Christian brotherly love than that which is exercised in behalf of orphans, abandoned children, workhouse children, criminal children, such as will be sure, if their fellow Catholics do not take the matter up, to fall into the hands of non-Catholic societies or a non-Catholic State. Oh, my brethren, you who are fairly off and have little ones of your own, think of these helpless children, and sacrifice some of your comfort, time, and money to work the diocesan organisations which are founded to save them !

When our Lord passed from the coast to the inland sea, laying His hands on the suffering, the crowds cried out, He hath done all things well ! A day will come when we shall want a verdict of this kind. Alas ! it will be no triumphal progress for us. It will be the day of our judgment. We shall pass swiftly from these scenes where men have sometimes praised and sometimes blamed us. We shall take none of their cheers with us, nor shall we be oppressed by any of their blame. We shall pass into the unseen—the

spiritual region where spirits dwell; but they who dwell there will have little to say to us. It will not be for either the demons to deride or the angels to welcome us—yet. One word must be said first—one word of one Person. What is that word? Who is that Person? It is Jesus Christ, our Judge—and the word is, Well done, thou faithful servant! Will it be said? We may well doubt. We call ourselves Christians, but we know that the love of the world disputes in our heart with the love of Christ—that we forget Him, neglect Him, and even turn our backs upon Him. A man's life here below may well make him doubt whether Christ will ever call his life good, and welcome him as a faithful servant. And yet there is a certain promise. "As long as you have done those things to these My least servants, you have done it to Me." Blessed brotherly love! The service of Christ—the proof of the love of God—the pledge of mercy at the judgment! Look to it, my brethren. Be kind, be pitiful, be generous. Use your faculties and means to seek out and help the poor and the needy and the little children, and there will be a cry of welcome, distant and faint, from the earth, yet very efficacious—He hath done all things well! It will be the cry of the little ones whom you have befriended—of the poor, the suffering, and the orphan! It will throw a veil over your sins and will remit their penalty, and your Master will recognise His faithful servant. O spirit of brotherly love! O spirit of generosity! O spirit of sacrifice! O spirit of the Gospel of Christ! O teaching of my Saviour! May I learn to love my

fellow-men ! May I think for the poor—think for the suffering—and show my love of my God by being ready and eager to give my means, my labour, my very life, for those in whom I find my Lord and Saviour Himself !

XIII.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

“Let the Peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts.”—*Coloss. iii. 15.*

WHEN the proclamation of the Peace of Christ was first made upon this earth, there were very few who heeded or heard it. It was Angelic voices that told the world of it. But they fell upon a quiet plain in a remote corner of Judæa, at midnight; and the few rough men who heard them understood them not. Yet such a divine proclamation was characteristic of that divine peace. For it was a peace which was not going to rid the great world of its wars, or to change the earth into heaven. It was not the voice of a herald interposing between two hostile lines of battle, and bidding strife to cease for ever. It was a message to the Christian heart. It was a pledge that, whatever might be the tumult and the din outside, there was now the hope and the sure means of rest and quietude within the spirit of man. It was the lighting up of a little light—little at first and barely noticeable—which was to expand and shine throughout the universe peopled by immortal souls, wherever men and women, in their labour and their sorrow, should come to hear the name of Christ.

Peace is a word of honour among men of every race,

and has been held in reverence in every generation. Men have waged war, without much cessation, from the beginning; but they have praised peace. For man can recognise, without much study or teaching, that it is peace, and not war, that he is made for. But men can also see that peace is practically impossible while this world lasts. As long as evil exists, and passion and imperfection, so long must there be trouble and conflict. The sailor does not expect the great ocean to be calm except for a day or an hour now and then. As long as there are the winds to play upon the yielding water, so long will there be tossing and tumult—so long will there be storm and peril and wreck. Therefore to hope that there will be no more wars, no more dissensions, no more misunderstandings, is to hope in vain. It is true that even on the troubled sea of the world the peace of Christ must and does exercise its serene power. But its grand mission is of another kind. It is intended to secure the tranquillity of a much smaller, but a much more complex, world than the one on which this sun shines. Its work is to put a stop to war within the boundary of the heart. It is given to still the heavings of that profound deep, the nature of man.

The human soul, created by God in its spirituality, with its unquenchable aspirations and its unknown energy and vitality, has this prerogative, that nothing can touch or hurt it save by its own permission. Outside of my being are men and things, words, thoughts, deeds, the laws of nature and the strife of the elements. Outside of me are persuasion on this side,

violence on the other ; example here, battles there ; all the course of human history, human effort, nature's blind course, the development of the universe. But none of it can touch me. Not a hand can hold me, not a cry can move me, not a weapon can reach me. I can move through the shock of battle unhurt ; I can face the storm and the earthquake without apprehension. Nay, even the wickedness of the dissolute, the unbelief of the scoffer, the persuasive tongue of the false friend, the rushing torrent of human custom—even these things will pass me by and leave me uncontaminated. And, what is more, there lives not a man who can be my master. No scourge that man's hand can make, no rack that he can devise, no prison that he can build, will ever force me or hold me. Such is the prerogative of a spiritual nature. Of instances and proofs history is full. In virtue of this, the weak have defied the strong, mind has laughed at muscle, spirit has triumphed over matter, and the empire of this world has often been held by thoughts and ideas. The human spirit is its own kingdom, surrounded by a sea which no enemy's ship can pass, sovereignly ruled by its own reason and freewill.

To bring the gift of peace to a realm so strongly defended against hostile invasion must surely be easy. It would be so were the human soul pure reason and lucid will, and nothing more. By virtue of these, its essential powers, it can defy the universe without. But it does not find it so easy to rule within its own borders. My spiritual soul is safe from hostile attack—unless her own servants betray her. For the soul

is served by a whole household of inferior powers—the feelings, the emotions, the desires, the loves, the hopes, the fears of the unspiritual part of man. These are what the Christian preacher, after St. Paul, calls the “flesh” and the “body of death”. These are what we all of us call the “passions”.

Human passion is not here taken in the sense of temper or anger. It is taken to mean that spontaneous and sometimes violent emotion, of whatever kind, which wakes up, and thrills or flames, when in presence of a stimulating object. Thus when the senses of a man show him his enemy, he feels the emotion of anger, of abhorrence, of aversion, or of fear. When pleasant things come in his way, he loves them and desires them. When his vanity is hurt, he is moved to indignation and revenge. When things are hard to do, he shrinks and desires to attempt them not. When all is well with him, there springs up, unbidden, the mysterious emotion of joy; when trouble touches him, or pain, then he is mournful, and the springs of his tears are reached. How well each one knows, by his own experience, the reality and the wide reach of this responsive sensitiveness! You have seen a lake in the guarded precincts of a park, and you have observed how its surface answers to the conditions of the air and the sky; how it reflects the sunlight, roughens with the wind, mirrors the trees on its banks, shows blue and fair when the sky overhead is clear, and grows dark and sullen when the clouds lower or the darkness comes down. Is it not thus with human nature?

And yet, let it be carefully observed, this unstable surface, these moods, these quick changes, are by no means human nature itself. They come and they go under conditions that are largely independent of the will and the reason. Hence they do not, at least of necessity, involve the spiritual soul in responsibility. In themselves, and apart from wilful exposure to temptation or deliberate indulgence, the emotions of passion, although not virtuous, are not sinful either. We are born with our passions, as we are born with our senses; and just as the eye is affected by a day-light scene, or the nerves thrill to the prick of pain, so the passions of the lower nature respond when these objects are presented to them.

Nevertheless, the passions can be controlled and regulated. And it is just this which constitutes the labour and the conflict of the followers of Jesus Christ. It is just in this work of the control of the lower nature that lies the secret of the Peace of Christ.

The soul—that is, the reason and the higher will—can undoubtedly do a good deal with the emotions of its lower nature. It cannot absolutely root them up. It cannot despotically impose upon them such a silence as to prevent them from crying out, or bind them so that they cannot stir. A power like this was for the primeval Paradise, not for the world on which has fallen the curse of original sin. But, first of all, it can watch them carefully, and be ready to prevent them getting the upper hand. The immortal spirit has a great power of steady resistance; it is capable of strong pressure. Like the column of water in our

hydraulic engines, so thin and unsubstantial, the spiritual energy can work upon the brute conditions of passions and emotion, and by degrees the heavy weights are lifted and the crushing loads are cleared away. But that this result may follow, the reason must see very clearly, and the will must act with the strongest determination. It can be done; but not without that powerful moral strain and effort which few natures are inclined to make.

Moreover, there is another way to circumvent the passions. We can keep away from them the objects which stir or move them. It may not be—it is not—possible to do this absolutely and completely; for we must continue to live in the world. But to avoid occasions, to remove temptations, to diminish the force of that which provokes to sin—this is not impossible; and it is simple duty, not only to the Christian, but to the reasonable man. And if a man, with earnest perseverance, practises such repression, such isolation, such starvation, on his passions, they must to a greater degree or a less die down. Any vital power that is not used loses vitality. A disused muscle grows flabby and poor. A disused sense grows dim, feeble, and powerless. Its vital tissue refuses to respond to a stimulus. Our passions, which belong more to our corporeal or animal nature than to our spiritual, follow this law. It may, therefore, come about that a man, after a lifetime of stern vigilance, of unflinching repression, of the abjuration of all that can provoke, and of self-denial carried beyond what is of obligation, may have reduced his passions to something like

atrophy, insensibility and death. Then the death of the flesh becomes the life of the spirit, the subjugation of what is animal leaves the soul more free, and the crushing of rebellious risings gives the immortal nature even in its mortal conditions, peace.

I think I hear at this stage the mournful complaint of the pilgrim whose lot it is to carry through the journey of this life a nature which requires for its right government such strenuous effort as is here implied. Who, it will be asked, is equal to such a task? Where is to be found the force, the strength, the courage, that will be equal to a life-long and successful struggle with the half of one's being? Who can win peace by such a war as this?

Before endeavouring to answer this, I would ask you to observe that it is impossible to dispute the necessity and the obligation of resisting and subduing our lower nature. The difficulty of the work may be what it is; but all the same it must be done. There is no form of Christianity—there is no form of religion—which does not recognise self-restraint, laws, prohibitions. “Thou shalt not” is a formula which you find in the Christian Decalogue, but it is equally heard in the teaching of nature herself. In these days, it is true, one sometimes hears a gospel preached which is very different from that of Him Who said of His follower, “Let him deny himself”. These men proclaim that the true way to live is to cultivate every part of one's nature equally; to develop, to indulge, to stimulate every power, every passion and every appetite—and not to kill or to root out. And

they will tell you that this is the way to enjoy life.

Now, it is impossible to deny that some lives are made pleasant enough by being lived on this theory. The reason is, first, that some people have a combination of means, surroundings, good luck, and good health which are exceptional; and, next, that there is in human nature a capability, when these circumstances concur, of becoming what I may call drugged or intoxicated, so as not to hear either the voice of reason, the warnings of religion, or even the remonstrance of conscience. But if we take into our consideration the widespread human race itself, in its countless generations, then we see in an instant that this principle of complete licence is not only against reason, but is the mother of mischief and misery. That it is condemned by reason, is itself a fatal condemnation. I am conscious of a spiritual nature—of spiritual visions, spiritual aspirations, spiritual possibilities of achievement. Am I right in allowing the passions of the animal—the unintelligent emotions of the brute—to disturb my rational life, my intellectual aims, my spiritual efforts to know and reach my Maker and last End? Every fibre of my higher nature cries out, No. And be sure that nature never cries out in vain. Nature—I mean one's true and inmost nature—may be silenced for a time. Her voice may be gagged like a prisoner's by that strange power we have of turning upon ourselves. But as surely as this universe, with its laws, came into existence without our co-operation, and works itself out in spite of any opposition that

we can offer, so surely the laws of the spirit will have their way; and whatever is found in opposition will be crushed. Existence is long. There is plenty of time. Even the unbeliever does not pretend to be sure that his coffin will hold all there is of him. The teaching of experience is this—that nature will have her revenge; and there is no province or department of nature so full of vigour, so safe against any effort to quench its life, as the higher nature of a man. Let the voluptuary remember this! Let the man who worships his appetites remember this! He knows what he is doing at the present moment, but he does not know what is in reserve behind the slowly-lifting curtain of his existence. Or rather, he might know if he chose; for the warning is clear and its meaning is unmistakable.

But it is not only by arguments like this that we can see the absoluteness of the law of self-denial. We have only to look straight before us. Can any one deny that whatever holiness, happiness, light, or affection has prevailed in the history of man, has been the result of self-restraint? These blessed conditions have not, alas! been too common in the world. They are not too common at this moment. But they would be rarer still if Christianity or enlightened reason did not keep in check a certain number of human instincts and appetites. There are impulses in man which, as every one knows, lead, directly or indirectly, to dishonesty, rapine, impurity, violence, and murder. To indulge these promptings would be to make society impossible. There could be no government, law, com-

merce, or social intercourse. There would be anarchy, hatred, barbarism, and bloodshed. Neither could the family last, under these circumstances, for a single generation. The fire on the hearth would sink into ashes; the roof-tree would fall in upon misery and desolation. To the individual the consequences would be equally ruinous. No peace, no leisure, no training, no education; no spiritual activity, no preparation for eternity; human life, with all its glorious promise and possibility, no better than that of the fox, the wolf, or the tiger, or even of the rat or the swine. Even human reason has understood this without the light of revelation. Reasonable men have held themselves in; strong hands have held in the multitude; law has been set up; custom has been sanctified; education has been handed on from father to son. Without Christianity all human effort has been proved to be of little avail. The boasted civilisation of the Greeks and Romans was only like an African jungle seen from a mountain—mighty trees and growths of loveliest colours, but underneath a black morass, the wallowing ground of the beast and the home of pestilence and death. Christianity has taken such a strong hold of the world's institutions and traditions that many of us do not recognise what it has done for us. It has done nothing less than this: it has embodied in actual legislation the dictate of the human reason, that there must be either restraint or ruin. And even where Christianity is more or less cast off—even in states which have rejected religion and in communities which no longer believe in Jesus Christ—still Christianity is powerful.

You see, among the hills of Wales, here and there the huge ruins of ironworks now long abandoned to decay ; and you observe that the tall chimneys have fallen and the strong walls are crumbling to pieces ; but still the great iron beams and girders are in their place and hold the wrecked fabric in something like the shape it had when its mighty fires were alive. But in proportion as the world shakes off the Christian tradition and relapses into naturalism and animalism, so must it be prepared for the revenge which human nature and the Creator of human nature will take. Bring back Paganism, and you bring back lawlessness and corruption under the shadow of her mantle. And even an individual Pagan in the midst of a Christian society will hardly escape. I have already admitted that he may seem to do so, at least in the life he passes on this earth. But, after all, not many do. The man of unrestrained self-indulgence may make himself a nest as snug and safe as he can ; he may spread his couch with the utmost care, and shut out every rude air and troubling sound—but, even before the moment of God's judgment, his outraged spiritual nature will generally make him feel her power. It will be called his "health," his "nerves," his "spirits"; or it will come from his children or his friends ; or it will be sheer disgust, satiety, weariness, remorse—in some shape or other retribution will arrive, and there will be the proof, even ere death arrives, that the deepest and strictest law of nature—the law that can least be violated with impunity—is the law of self-restraint.

With such an obligation pressing upon our nature—

a nature whose weakness and blindness we know too well—it becomes absolutely necessary to consider our resources, and to try to see how it may be possible for us to carry such a life-long load—to support such a life-long strain. For there can be no disguising it from ourselves,—the law of self-restraint is a law of war. It is the war alluded to by St. Paul (*Gal. v. 17*) when he says that the “flesh lusteth”—that is, rises or rebels—“against the spirit”. It is a war within the narrow borders of our own being. It is a war to which a man must gird himself, or renounce the right to the name either of Christian or of reasonable being. Has the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ no work to do—no part to take—in a war like this? Has Christ Himself, Who came to seek and to save, no office, no ministry, beside the soldier who vows to be loyal to Him? Both our Lord and His holy religion have laid upon us their commands; but is there nothing more? Is there to be no help? Is it to be always fighting, and no victory, no peace?

No one who knows what is meant by the Incarnation can hesitate for an instant as to the answer. The eternal God of Heaven took a human nature and became Man in order to save us; but no one can be saved who refuses to engage in the war between the spirit and the flesh. Therefore, He came in order that this war might be successfully fought. It could not be otherwise. It would have been useless to pay our price had He not intended to be with us on the battlefield. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary itself, would have been of no avail, had He not also intended that all the

generations to come should be able somehow to enjoy His presence and His help. This war is a matter of life and death. How could it be possible that He should allow us to go through it without Him? And if He was to interfere at all, it must be as a conqueror. If He takes up arms, it must be to rout every rebel force, and to drive the dust and the din of war over the very frontiers of the land or into the absorbing ocean. It must be as when He rose from sleep that night upon the lake, and commanded the winds, and there came a great calm. This fateful war, this struggle, this disordered troublous human life—if Christ our Redeemer is to take the task of setting it right—must no longer be subject to that primeval doom of heartless fighting. There must be some short and speedy way to peace. My brethren, do you not believe it? It would seem that but few of us do believe it. Or else why do we hesitate to give ourselves wholly to Christ? Is it not because we stand uncertain between self-indulgence on the one hand, and what we conceive to be the dry dull life of mortification on the other? But if we understood the office of Christ, we should know that in that life, so foolishly named dry and dull, there is nothing less than that precious and stupendous revelation of Christ's Incarnation, the Peace of Christ. Turn to the Holy Scriptures, and note in what a marked way Peace is connected with the Incarnation. Long before the Angel came to Mary—in the days when kings and prophets were longing to see the day of Christ, and had not seen it—the Psalmist sung of the moment of all

moments, when justice and peace should meet and kiss each other. Eight centuries before the night of Bethlehem, Isaias had had a vision of that wonderful One, that mighty God, Whose name should be the Prince of Peace. Even then the people of Israel were promised that their redemption should come, and that there their peace would be as a river, and their justice as the waves of the sea (*Isaias* xlvi. 18). That blessed promise was fulfilled when, on the night of the Nativity, "Peace on earth" was proclaimed from the heavens in the hour when the world first worshipped its God incarnate. This was what St. Paul calls the "peace of Christ" and the "peace of God". It was this peace which Jesus breathed on His disciples and bade them carry into every house where they were received. It was this which the Apostles prayed for with paternal longing when they sent their Letters to the Churches, and put at the head of them all the good and fruitful wish of the "grace and the peace of God". This was the peace that was to "surpass all understanding"; and the herald of God could promise the nations no deeper blessing than "joy and peace in believing". Yes, Christ's coming might, in one sense, mean war. It might be true that He was to bring the sword, and to divide the dearest friends when any human heart dared to prefer the world to Himself. But still He is the bringer of peace; and that must mean that He has a secret for the human heart, a balsam for the human spirit, and a way of being present in the very midst of a man's being, which will secure His true servants essential and radical peace amidst all

the tumults of the earth and the tempests of the soul.

The Peace of Christ—the peace of the troubled Christian soul which comes through the Incarnation—is bestowed by Christ Jesus upon the soul first through a Lesson; secondly, through a Ministration; and, thirdly, through a Presence. Let us take these in order.

1. The lesson is nothing else than the preaching of the Cross. No man who accepts this teaching can fail to be at peace. For the acceptance of the law of the Cross is the death of human selfishness; and as soon as selfishness is dead there is substantial and essential peace. Whence arise disturbances within the heart of man? From desires, from repugnances, from fears. What is it that thus desires? What is it that rejects and hates? What is it that fears and dreads? The mysterious central human self. To it the whole universe is in the position of an enemy, or an outsider. To it every person and every thing is just what each can add to its pleasure or contribute to its pain—that, and nothing more. Its attitude to all the world is that of one who watches, ready to snatch at what is pleasant and to resist what is the opposite. To it the laws of creation are indifferent except where its path crosses theirs; to it progress, culture, and brotherly love are names that concern it not; and the very being of God is the idea of One Who forbids its free expansion, and will one day punish its most cherished excesses. It is something different from body or soul, from spirit or flesh, from reason or will or sense. It is

the being's inmost citadel, and by its very existence it is what I have described. For I have described a tendency, a bent, a leaning. I have not called such tendency sin, and I have not called it virtue. Something more is needed before it can be either. There must be reflection and the play of reason and of free-will. Self is rather the dead weight which every lifting power in the universe has to reckon with—a gravity that tends downwards, and pulls against the upward effort; that taxes the limbs of the fleetest steed, and in time relaxes the pinions of the lightest bird; that stops every engine of man's contrivance, and challenges the most violent of the elements to a contest in which they must surely be defeated. Such, in the moral order, is self. No words are required to show how trouble and disturbance must come to a nature where self is not neutralised. For it is needless to say that self cannot have its own way. The world was not made for *its* gratification. It has to take its chance with a thousand elements and agencies at work around it. Like a man in a crowd, it must look out for pushes and scant respect; and being so sensitive and fastidious as it is, it cannot help feeling the checks and the buffeting. Natural law will collide with it, its environment will hamper it, its fellow-men will wound it. With a hundred wants, a hunger for this, a thirst for that, a dread of the other, poor self can never be much better than a hunted animal that never knows when the dogs will be upon it. Ah! my brethren! Read history—read your own experience. You have sometimes seen the veil lifted from a man's

career, and you have witnessed then the confirmation of those words of St. Augustine in the book of his *Confessions*: "In whatever direction the soul of a man shall turn itself, it encounters pain and sorrow unless it turns to Thee!" (bk. iv. ch. 10). Self has brought misery to men of every condition and every generation. The rich and prosperous have never been satisfied, the poor and needy have pined in envy and disappointment. The conqueror has subdued everything but his own ambition and his own fears. The slave has never ceased to tug at his chains. Happiness has come in gleams, brief as the December sunshine; joy in flashes, like summer lightning. All the rest has been the greyness of discontent, the east wind of adversity, the steady rain of hopelessness, the storm of sharp misfortune, or the constant battle of opposition. For self has reigned in the moral world, and therefore there has been no peace.

No teacher or philosopher, but only Christ, has ever taught the secret of the Cross. For that teaching is a divine revelation. Human philosophies have tried to regulate self. They have given it rules and prescribed bounds. They have advised moderation, resignation, contentment. They have offered it every variety of wise reflection—abstract truth, spiritual elevation, tried experience. It need not be denied that they have partially succeeded, and have in some instances diminished the selfishness of self and moderated the pain and disappointment of life. But no Pagan, either in precept or in practice, ever did much to change human conditions in this respect. No, nor any

Christian either who has not learned and accepted the secret of the Cross. For what is that secret? It is only this, that a man must "take up" the Cross.

Those words were the explanation of the Angel's cry at the Nativity. It was near the end of His human life, and probably just after He had declared to St. Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church" (*Matt.* xvi. 18), whilst He yet lingered in the parts of Cæsarea-Philippi, on the lower slopes of Mount Carmel, that He first of all revealed to the Apostles some part of His Passion, and then, to the crowd which flocked to hear Him, uttered the secret of the carrying of the Cross, and the revelation that the only way to save one's life is to lose it. The one truth explains the other. It is almost impossible for us to realise the solemnity of that first phrase—"Let him take up his Cross". We must not suppose that our Lord had then informed His hearers that He Himself was to carry the Cross and to die upon it. These present words of His were destined one day to assume a yet more vivid colour when remembered in the light of the Passion. But for the moment they meant simply the extreme and the absolute degree of self-denial. But with what lightning force they must have struck! The punishment of crucifixion, though never used by the Jews, was well known and understood by those who heard our Saviour speak. The Roman conquerors had brought it in. It meant, to those who listened, the extreme horror of all horrors; and the picture of the unhappy criminal, carrying his own cross to the place of his execution, was one to

send a thrill and a shudder through the listeners. Yet our Lord used that illustration to explain what kind of self-renunciation His kingdom required. And He made His words more emphatic still when He uttered what must have seemed so strange a paradox, that if a man wished to save his life he must not hesitate to throw it recklessly away.

The history of eighteen centuries of Christianity—of the practice of the Gospel—of saintly lives and Christlike experience—has made these words cease to astonish; to our ears they are at this moment a truism—a truism of the supernatural order, which we have been taught to consider far more important than nature or this lower world. But who is it that really takes them in? Would that they did startle us! Would that they came to us with some effect of that sinister and tremendous peremptoriness with which they astonished the Apostles and the multitude! For do we understand that this is the doctrine of total and absolute renunciation? Do we really apprehend, with our living and waking senses, that what Christ preaches is the complete surrender of the central fortress and citadel of our self? Do we see that the flag must come down, and the towers be blown up, and the ground cleared, and the Cross set up instead? Do we recognise that self is no longer to be regulated, moderated, or tamed to good behaviour; but slain, hewn in pieces like that Agag of the Old Testament whom the unfortunate Saul was weak enough to spare? Yet it means as much as this. It means the surrender of love and of hate, of desire, of regret, of

selfish fear. It means the indifference to vanity and esteem, to ease and luxury, to money and money's worth, to contempt, to opposition, and to pain. And it means even more; for all these things, although they are the shapes and the habitations of self, are yet not self; and therefore the law of the Cross means that supreme principle which St. Paul has put into immortal words when he says, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (*Philip. i. 20*). "Therefore I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (*Gal. ii. 20*). It is the acceptance of this extreme doctrine that is the secret of human peace. For the mere recognition by a man that he wants nothing, hopes for nothing and fears nothing, except in Christ, cuts the very ground from under the feet of the lawless forces which fight and struggle within the soul. I do not say it subdues them or exterminates them. Let us not exaggerate. But that doctrine and its acceptance creates a little stronghold in the soul's centre—the centre which before was occupied by self—in which there is set up a firm, true, and unassailable peace. Let winds blow and waves rise—it is no matter; they cannot affect that innermost union with Christ, where the Cross stands planted for ever. Let desires rebel—no matter; once for all the heart has recognised that it is best to give up everything—everything! Let it hold to that, and whatever be the strength of its passions it will have a peace which neither nature nor philosophy can give. No human teacher ever laid it down that renunciation

was the best. This is what makes the heart's peace. No human teacher ever discovered that to fight in full acceptance of the Cross was not war but peace; the fighting being, as we may say, outside, the peace in the soul's centre. The heathen moralist has sometimes extolled the pleasures of self-denial in this or in that; no one ever dared to proclaim that to renounce on principle all self-gratification was the secret of a deeper pleasure far.

2. This is the Peace of Christ. But if it comes to us, first of all, in a lesson from the lips of Him Who came from heaven to draw us to Him, He is not the one to leave His poor scholars and disciples to learn and digest that lesson by themselves. We belong to His school; we take in His doctrine; but He is a Master Who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust, and Who therefore would minister to us in our weakness. A grand doctrine, like the doctrine of absolute renunciation—the absolute preference of Christ's Cross to every other thing—goes a long way to change the face of a world. But the firmer is man's grip upon that doctrine, the more resolute his obedience to it; the clearer his view of its consequences, the deeper will be his peace. There were men—and women, too—in our Lord's day who rose up at a word, and leaving all things followed Him. His voice is no longer heard as it was then; his Divine presence no longer affects the senses and pours upon the powers of the soul the Divine endowment of faith and love and fortitude. Yet no man who believes in the possibility of the Peace of Christ can afford to dispense with the

influences which, since His Ascension, have been by Himself given to the world in His place. Peace means power, somewhere. When the fighting elements are strong and desperate and obstinate, it means a power beyond earthly power. The citadel of man's soul, which the doctrine of renunciation delivers over to Christ, is not more than the capital of the kingdom. That, indeed, is much. It is victory, it is salvation. But to make it safe, and also to spread the Divine Peace further and further, and so to make the glorious harvest of peace more and more fruitful, we need as much as we can have of the power of Jesus Christ. To the Catholic believer there is, in this world, a Sacramental influence which, like the interposition of angelic powers in an earthly battle, is divinely connected with the establishment of peace. I use the word Sacramental in a wide sense—not merely for the Sacraments proper, but for all that visible dispensation of word and rite, of sacrifice and sacrament, which is the work of the Spirit of Jesus, and which has for its object the destroying of all adverse influences and the setting up in your heart and mine of the likeness of Christ. Ah! say not that Jesus has gone away! He is near to every one of us, using times and occasions, using men, gestures, words, our very senses, in order to take captive our spirits and to pour upon us His strength. The priest at the altar prays that you may have peace. The giver of a Sacrament invokes peace upon you. When your sins are confessed, you are told to go in peace. Peace, joy, patience, tranquillity are the gifts the Church prays for throughout

her liturgy. It is as if Christ, Who said, "Peace be to you" when He appeared on the day of His resurrection, were still saying it in the multiplied ordinances of that visible kingdom which thinly veils His hand and majesty from our sight. He seems to tell us how He feels for our life-long struggle; to remind us that He, and He alone, can calm our passions and kill our evil inclinations. For this purpose has He sought the earth; for this has He lived, died, and risen again. For this does the Church exist, for this the altar is erected; for this the sacred ministry is established. True, His fortifying and illuminating grace can visit us in any way He pleases. But the wide Sacramental ordinance, as it is established by Him in fact, so also is certainly grounded on wisdom; and it is to men the ordinary means of the peace which the world cannot give. We know it, my brethren. We have felt the passions grow calm under the influence of the Sacraments. We have known temptation lose its strength. We have felt sensuality diminish and evil desires die down; we have been able to quench hatred and ill-feeling; we have put down dishonesty and cast out fear; we have been lifted up to despise hardships from without, and even persecution. And this has come from the touch of Christ's Hand and the power of His word, and the inflow of His mighty grace. O strong Sacraments of the holy Catholic Church! How mistaken are they who think they can be at peace without them! Their peace is too often false peace; it is too often surrender to the enemy; it is the peace of slavery—slavery to pride or to sloth or to sense,

It is the peace which will sooner or later bring on, not merely war, but a disastrous war, and destruction and despair.

3. Thus Christ is with us, giving peace, fulfilling those words of His, "My peace I give you, My peace I leave to you. Not as the world giveth do I give" (*John* xiv. 27). No, my brethren. The world gives, sometimes, external, apparent peace. This is not what you seek. You do not mind the buffeting of temptation; what you want is peace in the heart's core. There was a Heart once—nay, there is yet, though it is past all anguish now—which, though it suffered more than we can know, was the royal abode of peace the most absolute and divine. Our Lord had no passions. It is true He was really man, and therefore the desires and sensations and feelings proper to human nature were His. But as these human promptings were absolutely under His control, both as man and (it need not be said) as God, we cannot call them, in the usual sense of the word, passions. The word would convey an unworthy meaning. No shadow of imperfection ever crossed the surface of His most sacred humanity. No feeling stirred in Him but what was noble, just, pure, and holy. Yet what a world of magnificent emotion was the human and sentient nature of Jesus Christ! Far out of the reach of imagination is the activity of that Sacred Heart. What can we say of its absolute devotedness to the Father—what of its humility—of its obedience—of its detachment—of its love of suffering—of its love of souls? The contemplation of these marvels might seem to have no lesson

for us—for us who have to acquire every one of these and such like virtues inch by inch on the ground of our poor fallen nature. But we are very much mistaken if we think so. The truth is quite the other way. The absolute peace and glorious light of the realm of the Heart of Jesus might truly cast us into some discouragement if they were only there to dazzle us and make us marvel. But we know that we are encouraged to imitate them, and encouraged by our Lord Himself. You may be sure they are more than objects of admiration—more than lovely and divine perfections which we admire as stars in a firmament a hundred miles above our heads. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, prayed thus: “The Lord of Peace Himself give you everlasting peace in every place” (2 *Thess.* iii. 16). The Prophet Jeremias, hundreds of years before Bethlehem and Nazareth, thus prophesied of Christ: “Is there no balm in Galaad? Or is there no Physician there? Why, then, is not the wound of the daughter of My people closed?” (*Jer.* viii. 22). Can you guess how the balm of our Lord’s Sacred Humanity will heal the wounds of your nature and give you peace? There is another prophecy, of Isaias, which makes it plainer (he is speaking in the Person of the future Redeemer): “The Lord hath anointed Me. . . . He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart” (that is, the afflicted), “to give the mourners of Sion a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief.” Then, referring to the ruin of our nature by original sin, he says, “They shall build the places that have been waste from of

old, and shall raise up ancient ruins, and shall repair the desolate cities" (*Isaias* lxi. 1-5). If there is anything certain, it is that our Lord Jesus Christ continues to do these things to the souls that seek Him even to the very end. There can be no misunderstanding as to what is meant by the healing, the anointing, the restoration here described. It is the nature of man that wants healing. It is the soul and body of toiling human pilgrims that want all the balm and all the oil, and all that the divine Physician can do. It was said, in the days when He was on earth, that "a virtue went out from Him and healed all" (*Luke* vi. 19). It was prophesied in the Canticles that His name was as "oil poured out" (*Cant.* i. 2). It was not the body only that He healed, but sin and passion. His sacred Name has lost none of its power—how is it possible? Then to what do these divine promises amount? Surely to nothing less than this—that if you approach Christ, you will share in the healing of your passions and the consequent peace of soul which it is the office of His Sacred Humanity to bestow. You ask in what way you must approach Him. There is only one way. Had you been present at Bethlehem you might have knelt and kissed His hand; had you stood on Calvary you might, perhaps, have bent your head over His sacred feet. When you go to Heaven you will see Him in His glory and join the Angels in praising Him for evermore. But on earth, and now that He is gone up to His throne, there is no way to approach Him but the way of remembrance, of worship, and of devotion. But it is

just this exercise of prayer in the presence of the Sacred Humanity that He has come to us in order to promote. It is this which unites us to God; it is this which weakens and destroys our passions. For what happens when, in humility and affection, we draw near in spirit to our Saviour? The virtues of His Sacred Heart go out from Him and pass into our souls. You need not doubt it. That is what they are intended to do—as the sun is intended to send his light to the uttermost ends of the earth, and as a fire comforts the bodies of shivering wayfarers, those most perfect emotions, endowments, and virtues of our Lord's Humanity exist for the very purpose of transforming our poor hearts and natures. O my brethren! You who complain of your temptations and are so downhearted about your frequent falls into sin, have you tried to touch the hem of your Saviour's garment? Have you turned to Him, thought about Him, longed for healing, prayed for peace? To fight against sin and to mortify your passions is good and necessary; but to make this effectual you must not only use the Sacraments, but make a practice of invoking the virtues of your Redeemer. No one can come, with devotion, into the presence of that divinely-consecrated Heart without feeling a divine consecration in his own heart and a resolution to live for God and God alone. No one can gaze upon that most true Humility without being pierced through and through with the truth of his nothingness and the joy of belonging entirely to God. The meditation of that lovely Obedience withers up within us that pride and obstinacy which are the

source of so much unrest. The heat of that profound love of souls dries the green wood of spite, jealousy, and unkindness in our wretched natures, and we are ready for sacrifice and apostleship. The balsamic odour of holiness—the “myrrh and stacte and cassia” which, as the Psalm says, “perfume His garments from the ivory house” of His human dwelling (*Ps.* xliv. 10)—spreads in the poor and unworthy heart that looks upon its Lord, and fills it, as it prays there, with a disgust for sin, a distaste for sensual gratification, and sometimes a longing for a good and holy life which has the most powerful effect in weakening our predominant passion. The contemplation of that royal and peaceful Heart—peaceful in spite of every pain and every trial—peaceful and tranquil at Bethlehem as in Egypt, at Nazareth as on the Cross—pours peace upon us like the oil and wine of the Good Samaritan; and the central peace of our being, which we have learned how to acquire by the taking up of the Cross, spreads like the breaking daylight over the regions of our being, cheering whatever it touches, illuminating all that is dark and fearful, chasing away shadows, and driving evil before it. O powerful and loving Saviour! too little have I sought Thee! Too indifferent have I been to the peace which Thou alone canst give! May I now begin to understand that no heart can enjoy true peace which does not, by real, genuine, earnest, and persevering prayer, deserve to feel Thy sweetness, Thy strength, and Thy transforming power!

XIV.

THE CHURCH THE CONQUEST OF THE
SACRED HEART.

(Preached at the Consecration of Salford Cathedral, June 15, 1890.)

“The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own Blood.”—*Acts xx.* 28.

IT is very certain that we cannot better thank Almighty God for the completion and dedication of this Cathedral Church than by a solemn act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For it is to the Sacred Heart that we owe this Church. It is to the Incarnation and the Passion that we owe that these walls and this roof are the House of God and the Gate of Heaven. It is to our Lord and Saviour's lavish generosity of love that we owe the abundant blessings, the spiritual gifts, the supernatural ministrations, which hallow the stones of this sanctuary and make this Altar the throne of the Eternal God. For it was Jesus Who “purchased” those things, paying for them the immense price of His precious Blood. For this Church, though it stands here and is your Church, and its space and extent are defined by the walls that you and your fathers have raised, is an expression and an embodiment of a far larger Church—the Church of the Living God. That Church,

though it is a visible Church, made external and brought into touch with men and women and things by human ministers and a visible organisation, is nevertheless far too wide and far too spiritual to be taken in by the eye of man, or to be limited to any space, however ample, of the surface of this earth. It is as wide as the whole world. It has no roof but the firmament which covers the earth. It is the Kingdom of God, not so much set up in the world, or sharing the world with any rival empire, as claiming every foot of the world's surface and every human being who comes in his generation, as its own by Divine right. It is the creation of the Precious Blood for the purpose and end of bringing everything human within the sphere of the blessing of the Precious Blood. It is the continuation of the Incarnation—the perpetuation of the intervention of a God-Man in human things, in order that the Voice of Jesus, the Hand of Jesus, and the Presence of Jesus, may never cease upon the earth, even though Jesus Himself hath gone up into the Heavens and sitteth at the right hand of God.

This grand and magnificent creation—which St. Augustine calls the “redeemed family of Christ our Lord, the exiled city of Christ our King” (*De Civ. Dei*, i. 34)—is the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But take note of the significant word of St. Paul—He “purchased it with His own Blood”. He purchased it. He gave something in exchange. What He gave was His Precious Blood. He need not have “purchased” it. He was God, and He could have

simply willed it, and, like the primeval earth, like the light, like the germ of life, like the immortal spirit of man, it would have sprung into existence at the "Fiat" of the Omnipotent. But it was to be otherwise with the Church. In those dim prophecies of the life of the Redeemer which occur in the Psalms—dim in their details, though most clear and unmistakable in their outlines—we constantly meet with a type of Jesus who is persecuted, on whom the waters pour in, who is overwhelmed in the depths of the sea, whose enemies are many, who is brought to the gates of death; and the Lord is prayed to save him and avenge him; and God's name is praised, for Sion is saved, and the cities of Juda will be built up (*Ps.* lxxviii.). And there is a great chapter in the prophecy of Isaias, where the Saviour that is to come declares his love for the Israel of future days—the Church of Christ—and relates what he has given to possess her. "I have given Egypt in compensation for thee, Ethiopia and Saba for thee; I have loved thee, and I will give men for thee, and people for thy life" (*Is.* xliii. 3-4)—thus in Oriental imagery declaring that he would give all wealth and all possessions to acquire the Church of his predilection. And again, in Zacharias, we hear of the prophet that is wounded in the house of those who loved him, of the shepherd smitten with the sword; the true prophet among many prophets; the true shepherd of the sheep; and the Lord takes up his cause, "he turns his hand to the little ones," and the redeemed people call on the name of the Lord (*Zach.* xiii. 6, 7).

He whom the Prophets thus foretold came in His time. He lived, He spoke, He suffered, He went up to Heaven. And St. Paul, the Isaias of the New Testament, looking back on his Master's work as the Hebrew Prophet had looked forward to it, said these words, "Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for her" (*Eph.* v. 25). He said this to the Christians of Ephesus. He had already, in bidding them farewell when he took ship on his famous journey to Rome, used those other words which I have quoted as my text—"the Church, which He purchased by His own blood". The Church as St. Paul knew her was yet in the infancy of her development. A few congregations in Jerusalem, at Ephesus, at Antioch, in Macedonia, in the islands of the Mediterranean, were all that yet represented the kingdom of which Isaias had written his magnificent prophetic descriptions. But the great Apostle knew what the Church was. Beyond the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Antioch, or the Church of Philippi, there was what he called the Church of the Living God. He believed—or let us say that he saw, with that prophetic vision which belongs to Faith, and most of all to the faith of the Apostle whom God hath called—a Body, such as he describes, of which Christ was the head, which the Bishops ruled, which was holy and one and indestructible, the pillar and the ground of truth, destined to gather all nations into its bosom. It is of this august Body that he says Christ loved her, and delivered Himself for her, and acquired her by His own blood. Just as every single human soul owes

its salvation and its grace to what Jesus did and suffered, so to Jesus does the Church owe her existence and her prerogatives. St. Paul more than once uses that phrase, "He loved me, and He delivered Himself for me" (*Gal. ii. 20*); or "He loved us and delivered Himself for us". In using it of the Church herself, he wished us to understand that as she is living, real, triumphant, abounding in grace, and near to Jesus, so there is the closest and most effectual connection between the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus and her existence with all her splendid prerogatives.

The work of the Redemption, then, as far as man is concerned, may be said to be the creation of the Church by Christ our Lord. Man was to be saved individually, by individual grace; but this grace was to come, as a rule, through a grand dispensation of ministers and human ministration. Therefore, when He came to save, He came to set up the city and kingdom of His Church. And it was His purpose that He should "purchase" the Church, and so purchase grace for you and for me.

This "purchase" was to be made, not by any earthly exchange; not by coin of the empire or by merchandise; not even by the painfulness of labour, the toil of preaching, or the sharpness of suffering—that is, not altogether or even chiefly. It was the work of His Sacred Heart. It was done during the thirty-three years He went up to Heaven before Pentecost; but the Pentecostal wind was already blowing, and the Pentecostal fires already kindled. For that had come to pass on the earth which no wise man or prophet

could ever have foreseen. There had gone up to the Heavens a sacrifice, and a Sacrifice of infinite value. Not under Solomon's vaulted roof was that Sacrifice made. Neither on any mountain top of Palestine or Syria. Not by a priest of the Law, or a priest of the Gentiles. Not of living victims or of the earth's fruits. It was complete in one instant; it was complete, though not finished, in the moment of the Incarnation. It went on at Nazareth, when the Lord was hidden, as at Jerusalem, in Galilee, or on Calvary, where the Lord was seen by men. It went on for years, each year filled with moments, till the consummation. It was the Sacrifice of a Heart. It was an offering, an adoration, a propitiation, an impenetration. Nothing like it had ever arisen from earth before. To those eyes which could see it, it wrapped up the whole earth as in the smoke of a cloud, covering and annihilating all that the world could boast of. "Behold, the Gentiles are as a drop of water, the smallest grain of a balance; behold, the islands are a little dust; and Lebanon shall not be enough to burn, nor all the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations are before Him as if they were not, and are accounted as emptiness and nothing" (*Isaias* xl. 15-29). For this was the Prayer, and the Desire, and the Heart's Act of One Who was infinite. This was Adoration adequate to the claims of the Infinite God. This was Satisfaction which paid to the uttermost grain all the debt which sin had made man incur to Divine Justice. This was Treasure which was equal to all the most precious things in all the treasury of

Heaven. It was thus the new Jerusalem was built up. It was bought by that Heart's Act. Every heavenly thing in its foundations, every Divine stone in its walls, every protecting beam in its roofs and temples, was bought. The earth on which it stood was bought. The right to go in and live there in peace and joyfulness was acquired by that Brother for all the children of men. It was a heavenly city; but it belonged to the earth below. It was to last with the world, and share the world's fortunes. It was for men, and wherever men were to be there it would in the future be found. It was immortal and indestructible. Other things would change in the world, but not the city of God. Its walls would be made more secure, its boundaries would enlarge, the precious stones of its streets would multiply, and the glory of its towers would increase. But the Divine quality of its heavenly origin would make it safe from death or decay, and no weapon formed against it would prosper. The existence, the indefectibility, and the development of the Church are the result of the Act of the Sacred Heart.

To enter into details, and to show how every grand characteristic of the Church of God has been purchased by some magnificent act of the Sacred Heart, would take too long. But at the present moment of the world's history there is one gift and prerogative of the Kingdom of God which must be noticed, because it flows directly from the sovereign Heart of the Divine Redeemer of men. The Church triumphs over man's intellect, and bends his mental pride to the

teaching of the Gospel. The Church has always done this, and she will do it to the end. Because it seems that in these days there is a more marked aversion on the world's part for intellectual submission, there is no reason for apprehension on the side of the preachers of Revelation, or for their weakly searching for easy ways with non-believers. For the essence of Faith, of the acceptance of the supernatural, of belief in God and in Christ, is the submission of the mind. Bring a man into the Church without the spirit of submission, and to him the Church is only a caravanseraï, whence, some morning before long, he will gather up his belongings and pass on. On the other hand, humility of heart and mind never fails to bring supernatural Faith. This power to bend the mind cannot come from the men who preach God's word. It does not depend on the man, or the moment. It was as evident when Paul preached on the Hill of Mars as when Augustine testified before Ethelbert. It triumphed as clearly in Rome in the first century as in Ireland in the fifth. It crushed the proud and subtle heresies of the first four hundred years as surely as it has ground to powder the intellectual or theoretical Protestantism of the sixteenth century. It has been equally effective when the preacher has been a fisherman and a philosopher, a grand genius and a humble priest. It has had possession of the most diverse populations, civilisations, nations, and communities. It has hung over the world like a golden cloud, dwarfing earthly philosophies, lifting men's hearts on high, and opening out

the vistas of the eternal and the infinite. It has inspired men to die; and, what is more than dying, to live heroically, generations and generations of them, with a firm hold of the spiritual, the supernatural, and the world to come, and with a fervent appreciation of the perfect life of Jesus Christ.

Whence comes upon the earth this heavenly gift that clings to the Church of Christ?

It has been purchased by a great abasement. The characteristic feature in the Act of the Sacred Heart is His humiliation. He died—but the virtue of His Death was His Obedience—and the virtue of His Obedience was His Humiliation. Laying aside the majesty of His Godhead, He descended to the earth. Instead of the spaces of the heavens, He took a Body which was His prison. Instead of the fiery throne and the awful sceptre, He took the crib. Instead of the obedience of the Angels, He sought the pressure of a human yoke. He bowed His head to men, to sinners, to the very elements. He allowed them to think Him ignorant, and poor, and common. And that energy of abasement, beginning from the Angel's salutation, swelled like a torrent through His thirty-three years, till, at the moment of Calvary's consummation, it fell sheer into the abyss. And then, as misty rainbows show where vast waters heave and dash, the gift of the obedience of Faith has followed throughout the centuries the humiliations of the Sacred Heart; the abasement of the Sacred Heart has opened the door of the Kingdom

of Christ to the minds and the intelligence of the human race.

We need not now consider what the race of men find in that Kingdom so dearly won; the beauty, the riches, and the peace, of the land which the Sacred Heart has acquired for them. But if men and women, since Christ went up to heaven, have found a home for the immortal soul on this earth, they cannot doubt Who it was that provided it. These hearts of ours want security; they want knowledge; they want support; they want love. It is certain that the world must always be dark and rough and inhospitable; for we are not here finally at home. Ignorance, passion, sin, our own and others', must make misery, and cause pain and anxiety. But three things have been clearly promised in *Isaias*: first, that every little one should walk in security; next, that the desert should blossom as the rose, that is, that ordinary human and earthly things should acquire a value and power not their own; and, thirdly, that the weak should be lifted and carried as part of the Dispensation of the New Law. Grace, Sacraments, the unfailing Word—these are the riches of the Kingdom of Christ. These are for the poor, the ignorant, the workers, the suffering, as much as for the educated man and the philosophic thinker. What is more, they are as high above the reach of culture and the highest human thought as the sunshine which rests on the mountains is beyond the command of earthly elements. All literature, all science, all art—all is poor and needy in comparison with Faith, Hope, and Charity, and

with the seven gifts of the Spirit. But the Kingdom is not rich merely because God has so willed it, but because the Sacred Heart has paid. The Redeemer of men threw from Him the riches of the universe. He stood on the bare soil of a bare and desolate world. Even its own wealth, such as it is, He would not touch or look at. He was born in a stable; He lived in want and need, at Nazareth; His Mother was poor, His foster-father a working man; He worked Himself for a wage to live by; He wore the clothing of the poor, and He was looked on as a poor man. He died between Heaven and earth, stripped of all things. Why, my brethren? To be poor is not to be great, or to be virtuous. No. But He took poverty to quicken the Act of His Sacred Heart; and because He embraced the pain and the sacrifice of poverty in that Act which His Heart sent up to Almighty God, He acquired thereby the treasures of that supernatural world of grace which, as from an overflowing spring, have made the world a Paradise ever since. Ah! immortal spirit of man! These altars, these walls, this roof, the very voice you hear, the very air of this church you breathe, are full of blessings which you find nowhere else on earth! And they are the fruits of Nazareth and Calvary. He hath undergone, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, the poverty of my human nature that I may possess the riches of His Divinity! (*Or. 2, In Pasch.*)

Riches, indeed, my brethren, for which we cannot bless and praise the Sacred Heart too much. But we must never forget that all He has purchased for us

and given us He has bestowed upon us for one purpose only. In the Prophecy of Isaias (v. i.), the Beloved—that is, the Son of God—made a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place; and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines; but he built a tower in the midst thereof and set up a wine-press therein. The Sacred Heart has made His vineyard; but the wine-press and the wine, which signify love and union with Himself, are what He has built it for. And therefore, if you will observe, He has not merely built His Church and given men the graces of Faith and of Gifts, but He has given His Redemption a personal character of so peculiar a nature that no prophet or wise man could ever have foreseen it. He has suffered. He has suffered not merely abasement, or merely poverty, which, in their nature, are incidents of all human life and existence, but He has suffered a prolonged passion and a cruel death. He has deliberately chosen extreme physical suffering. He chose it chiefly, as I need not say, in order to give a peculiar character and a peculiar intensity to that Act of His Sacred Heart by which He redeemed the world. But He chose it also in order to gain the hearts of men. For compassion is an instrument of magic power, which melts our complex human nature; and we never love so surely as when we pity. And He wanted to be sure of our love. He wanted His Church with all her prerogatives to be no mere institution or machine, but rather His own House. Therefore He suffered. In the hour of His Agony, one drop in the consolation offered by

the angelic messenger was the knowledge that so many devout hearts would learn by that very Agony to love Him. In the bitterness of His scourging and of His crowning with thorns, there was present to Him the thought that men and women to the end of time would by contemplating them draw nearer to Him. On all the Cross, round every nail, through every pang, there flowed, like some Divine refreshment, the tears of the Saints of every generation who were to learn to know Him in that Book of His own writing. And He saw the Churches of every century and every land; the Crucifix on the altar, the representations of His Passion round their walls; the great Sacrifice with its unfading remembrance of His Sacred Heart that was pierced; His Sacramental Presence of Love; and as the Hosts of Heaven continually before the throne cry Holy, so He saw, in the power of that Church and of the precious Blood, the bands and companies of the faithful unceasingly thronging the floors of those Churches with a perpetual remembrance of His death. He saw the perpetual blessing of Mass and Office. He saw the sinners at the confessionals, and the lives of devout communicants. He heard the little children raising their voices with clasped hands in hymns to His Sacred Heart. He saw the unbroken line of devout souls who never ceased to visit Him, to remember His Cross, and to pray for the departed. It was to be the prerogative of His own dear Church to bring men and women thus to His feet, not one of whom should come in or out without thinking of the Lord and His loving Redemption. Oh! Children of the

Catholic Church! If you have found the Saviour of your souls before the altar of her sanctuaries—if you have found, not a system, but a Father and Friend, recognise Who it is that purchased for you this supreme grace, and give your own hearts to the Heart of Jesus, which suffered so bitterly for this very thing.

This, indeed, is what the Catholic world will be doing this day. This is what you yourselves will do in words this evening. But there are deeds to be done as well as words to be spoken. Jesus Christ has done everything; we can neither recompense Him, nor does He want our recompense. Yet the great Christian rule is, in the words of St. Paul: “The charity of Christ presseth us” (2 *Cor.* v. 14)—or as St. Augustine says: “*Debitores nos fecit*”—We are Christ’s debtors (*In Joan*, tr. 47). We owe as much to Him as if He could be enriched by our gratitude; but all He wants is, that we should imitate Him. Therefore we must, above everything, be ready to make sacrifices for the Church for which He shed the last drop of His blood. Let us never forget that the Church is the appointed means of salvation, at least to those who have the opportunity of knowing her. Let us steadily remember that the desire of the Sacred Heart is what it always was since it began to beat on this earth—to increase the evidence and the influence of the Church, and to bring men’s minds into the sphere of her ministry. Can we doubt that at this moment the Sacred Heart is solicitous about the Sovereign Pontiff? When we think of him, my brethren, we know not whether to

triumph or to mourn. In his imprisonment, he upholds the Faith ; he draws around him more and more securely the unity of Catholicism, and he is teaching the Catholic populations their lesson. Yet he is wronged, kept in bonds, and insulted. This is evil—evil that fetters the Church herself. And if the power of Christ can draw good out of it, none the less are we all bound to pray continually that it may come to an end. There are great countries in Europe where the Church is rooted firm and fast in the soil, yet where it is made even hard for her to live ; where official persecution is trying to alienate from her her millions of subjects, and to turn away from her the generations that are springing up. You remember that prayer of the Sacred Heart on the eve of the Passion—“ Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me ! ” (*John* xvii. 11). Can His servants do less than cry out—“ Keep them ! Keep them ! ”

Again, there is the vast area of Christian misbelief—of that defective and inadequate Christianity which ranges from High Church Anglicanism to Unitarianism, with Free Thought and Secularism ; those tens of thousands whom the want of teaching keeps in darkness, yet whose natural virtues are by no means all destroyed. Is it not of them that our Lord and Saviour was thinking when He said : “ Other sheep I have that are not of this fold ; them also I *must* bring ” (*John* x. 16) ? What a force and pressure of love there is in that “ must ” ! Let those who are zealous for the interests of the Sacred Heart remind

Him of it. He can gather them in if He will. But He wants to be compelled by loving prayer.

Moreover, look at the regions of the heathen; regions which are now not far away from us, as they were from our fathers, but by modern speed and rapid intelligence brought to our very doors; regions with which we converse in the flashing of the electric spark; regions which send us our luxuries and our necessities, and which seem to be waiting for the hand that is to civilise them. In Africa, paganism, more or less degraded, reigns over unknown millions; and a worse danger threatens, in the powerful advance of a Mahomedanism which will shut the doors to Christianity for indefinite centuries. In Asia there are ancient systems and modes of thought, ruling from the Red Sea to Japan, which are hardly intelligible to European ideas. And there is the realm of the false Prophet. Catholicism alone can give religion to the savage, meet the philosophy of Buddhism, and break down the fatalism of the Turk. But what are Christians about? The countries are white with the harvest; but our missionaries are not even numerous enough to look after the converts, and the converts are only (as B. John Gabriel Perboyre said) like the stalks of corn which the gleaners have left. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest" (*Matt.* ix. 38). Ah! to think that it all belongs to Him, and that He cannot gather it because it must be gathered by human hands and human labour! To think of this, and then to remember that you and I are so indifferent—can live, and enjoy ourselves, and make no effort in the

cause of a Heart which purchased our souls by its blood !

Let us not deny that sacrifices are made. It would ill become any one to do so on this day, when we celebrate the completion of a Church which has not been completed without many sacrifices. There are those here present who go back to the days before 1844, when on Whit Monday the Catholic schools came in their procession to this spot, and Bishop Sharples blessed the primary stone of this Church. Since then—since 9th August, 1848, when Bishop Brown celebrated the first Mass in the presence of eight other bishops and 120 priests—to this day, when we have at length formally and solemnly consecrated it—in all that six-and-forty years how much labour, how many sacrifices, what anxieties and what prayers to God ! Let us mention reverently the name of William Turner, first Bishop of Salford, to whom the name of founder belongs, and who, as his account books still show, denied himself for twenty years, week by week, in order to adorn the Church and reduce the debt. May he rest in peace ! Among the laity, let us remember the names of Lee and of Leeming. There are other names, of those still living, some here present, which you can yourselves supply ; for I will only say this, that no labour is more thankless, more full of the spirit of the neglected Heart of Jesus, and more necessary, than the labour of working to pay off the debt of a church. May God reward those who have achieved it ! I would ask those who are here to-day to be generous in their contributions, in order that not even the necessary

expenses of the consecration may be left to weigh on the devoted hearts who have worked so hard.

Seeing the innumerable wants of souls, of the children, of the poor, no truly Catholic instinct will promote in this country anything which may look like mere display or unnecessary expense in the fabrics of our Churches. Yet a principle like this may easily be pushed too far. A fine and complete Cathedral Church is wonderfully effective in the Apostolate of the interests of the Sacred Heart. It is intended chiefly to be the home of the Blessed Sacrament. Its spaces, its solemnity, and its beauty, are the earthly heaven where Jesus reigns in His lowliness. The pomp of the solemn Mass and of the Liturgy impresses on the heart the grand thought of worship—of perpetual worship, and of universal worship. The word of God, in a fine Church, must have a firmer and a more emphatic accent to the world, even if it brings no more touching message to the heart. The variety of objects and of devotion which is possible keeps up something of that busy universality which suits every temperament and fills up every moment. In the crowds who attend there is the stimulus of enthusiasm which is felt in a multitude; and there are popular functions and devotions which both instruct the mind and lift up the heart. For these things you love your Church—and for many other things; for the graces you have had, the light you have received, the forgiveness of sins, the Bread of life; for the day of your first Communion, the day of your Confirmation; for the day of your marriage; for the voices of your pastors, some

gone to Heaven, others still labouring for you and for the Sacred Heart ; for the memories of your dead, who knelt where you kneel, and now are seen no more, but whom you never forget in Mass, in rosary, and in the Way of the Cross. These are the blessings which Jesus has purchased for you with His own Blood. He asks for one return : He asks for no more, but He will be satisfied with nothing less—that you dedicate your own hearts, your lives, and all that you are and have, to Him, and to Him alone.

XV.

THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

(Preached in the Cathedral of Plymouth, at the Consecration of the Right Rev. Bishop Graham, 28th October, 1891.)

“As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.”—*John* xx. 21.

“Go into the whole world.”—*Mark* xvi. 15.

AMIDST all religious differences and controversial conflicts, the great religious question of the world for all who believe in God and in Christ Jesus is a simple one, and it is not difficult to recognise it. It is whether there still continues on earth, ever since Jesus of Nazareth has ascended to the heavens, the special ministerial work of Jesus. In the Gospels, we see One Who taught with authority, Who by solemn speech forgave sins, Who called men to join Him, and Who gave them His Flesh to eat under the appearance of bread and wine. It is undeniable that, in regard to this, the Christian world is virtually divided into two camps—the Catholic Church, which holds that these things are still done every day; and all other Christians, who either deny this altogether in principle, or at least by separating from the corporate body to which the ministry, if it exist at all, was certainly confided, make it practically nugatory and impossible. There are, I know, numerous Chris-

tians, and denominations of Christians, who loudly insist that what they call the work of Christ goes on through every generation. But they are really speaking of a thing altogether different from what is here meant. I speak of the special ministry of Christ—His visible and sensible dealing with men, His accompanying His speech and His touch with interior supernatural grace of forgiveness, strength, and illumination, His most unmistakable organisation of a society with a real Head and laws of unity, His most solemn Eucharistic institution, and those special teachings which He commanded His Apostles to impart to the world. Were these to go on? Was there to be a visible and sacramental ministry always? Were His ideas of a society to be carried out and developed? Was the Holy Eucharist to be established in daily ritual and applied to daily life? Were His teachings to continue from generation to generation as clear, accessible, and safe as they were to the generation which heard them from His own lips? These are the questions which now concern us. For in one sense the work of Christ was not confined to the Christian era. It was in the world long before He came down from Heaven. Grace—the grace of forgiveness, of justification, and of regeneration, the grace flowing from Calvary—was always at hand for men. It was waiting for our first parents when they first stood, desolate and unhappy, outside the gates of Paradise. It covered the earth even before the Flood. It hung the rainbow in the sky as the waters went down. It called Abraham, laid upon Moses his mis-

sion, and drew Israel to the desert to hear the commandments of Sinai. By the grace of Christ the Prophet spoke, the Psalmist sung, the Priest and the King obeyed the Lord, the Jew and the Gentile saved their souls. No one, at any period, in any generation, who called upon the Lord with sincere heart, turned away from his evil deeds, and was converted to God, but was cleansed and purified. For the Lamb was slain from the beginning; the Blood of Christ brought salvation, by faith, by expectation, by anticipation, to the earliest as to the latest. No; it was not in the existence and reality of grace that the Incarnation of the Son of God made a difference in the world. What the Incarnation did—for those generations that came after Bethlehem and Calvary—was to make it easier for men to *approach* to grace. The visible Presence of God made man, His acts, His deeds, and His institutions, attracted men, took captive their thought and their fancy, and, in one word, brought God nearer to their hearts, to their faculties, and therefore to their souls. Under the old Law, David, in his penitence and his grief, shut himself up alone and lay upon the ground (2 *Kings* xii. 16); under the new, Mary Magdalene fell at her Saviour's feet and anointed them with precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair. David sought God, and God's grace, within the bare walls of his chamber; Mary found a living Man, heard the sound of His voice and felt the glance of His eye, and in finding the Man she found God and the mercy of God; and she was a type of all who were afterwards to seek God, since God had come down upon the earth.

The Catholic view, as I need not remind the greater number of those here present—the Catholic view or theory, or rather our most firm belief and vital conviction—is that Christ, as the minister or medium of access to the Father (*John* xiv. 6), is in the world still, notwithstanding the history of what took place on Mount Olivet forty days after the Resurrection. We believe that the world possesses more than His memory, more than His example, more than His Sacred Name, though these possessions are precious indeed. We believe that we have more even than His real sacramental Presence in the Holy Eucharist, although that Presence is a large part of what we possess. We have the Voice of Christ, we have the Hand of Christ, and we have the Sacrifice of Christ; three things which virtually constitute His undeniable Presence. For, first, if there is in the world, in every generation, a Voice which can declare Christ's revelation, and explain it, and defend it, and that without the possibility of error, that is the Voice of Christ and of none other. It cannot be merely the voice of priest or bishop, of council or of Pontiff—not even of all the bishops of the world. None of these have, of themselves, any claim to infallibility in teaching; if there is infallibility, it must be because it is Christ Who speaks. Again, if there be a Hand which is raised up over the high and the low, the weak and the strong, and whose touch penetrates beyond human flesh, even into the spiritual and immortal soul, cleansing the spirit, pouring in the grace of sanctification and of strength—and this we

believe to be really done in the ministry of the Sacraments—that Hand is the Hand of Christ, and of none other; for He alone could do this. Finally, if at a certain moment, under certain circumstances, the Lord of Heaven—Body, Soul, and Divinity—stoops down to the prison of the Eucharistic species and lies annihilated and mystically slain upon the Christian altar, that altar is Calvary, not so much repeated as continued; the Sacred Heart of the Victim of Calvary lifts up its stupendous Act of expiation and intercession in our very midst; and Christians stand round a true Sacrifice and partake of its fruits in their souls.

Such is the Gospel of Good Tidings of Christ. Such is that Kingdom of God of which He spoke so much during the forty days. Such is the “witness” which His Apostles were commanded to bear to Him, and the doctrine to which they were to make “all creatures” obedient. Let no one urge as an objection that Christ’s Kingdom is repentance, change of heart, conversion. Nothing can be more true. The Apostles had to preach these things. But the Prophets of old preached these things also—David in the Psalms, *Isaias* when he called on Israel to “wash and be clean” (*Isaias* i. 16); *Jeremias*, when he cried out in God’s name to Jerusalem, “Thou hast forsaken Me” (*Jeremias* xv. 6); *Joel* in the light of the day of judgment, *Jonas* in the streets of the great city of the heathen. This is the end, the purpose, the fulfilment of the eternal Gospel of God, now as in the beginning. But Christianity—adequately understood—means the continued ministry of Christ, that repentance may be

more prompt, change of heart more thorough, conversion nearer at hand, and grace more easily found. And it is this continued ministry and presence of Christ which is, in the adequate sense, His Kingdom. This Kingdom He founded, of this He spoke, in view of this He commissioned Apostles, promising them to be always with them, even to the consummation of the world.

Thus the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not only spiritual, but must also be external and visible. It is made up of stupendous spiritual efficacy; but that efficacy, if it is to touch humanity, must be stored up in clouds that will roll over sea and mountain and plain. Jesus Himself, for reasons of infinite wisdom, some of which are not difficult to follow, has withdrawn. No longer do those Divine Hands visibly wield the lightning of grace and healing; not again does the Blood of the Lamb stream over the solid wood of the Cross in the sight of the people of Sion. The Angel of the great counsel must himself find angels or ministers to carry that counsel through. There are His Angels, the blessed Spirits, the ministers who came down on the earth so many times in the days before He was made Flesh; who appeared to Abraham in the vale of Mambre (*Genesis* xviii. 1), to Jacob near the ford at Phanuel (*Genesis* xxxii. 24), to Moses on Horeb (*Exodus* iii. 2), to the Jewish multitude at the place of weepers (*Judges* ii. 1), to Gideon, to the mother of Samson, to Isaias in the wilderness. But He cannot send His Angels now. The ministry is too human, too closely touching the wounds and the

weaknesses of men and women. The sheep are to be fed as by a shepherd. The weak are to be strengthened, the sick to be healed; that which was broken is to be bound up; that which was drawn away is to be brought again; that which was lost is to be sought (*Ezekiel xxxiv. 24*). No. The ministers of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ must be men. There must be the voice and the hand of man. There must be no rare and miraculous apparitions, but an abiding presence of clear teaching and practical help. It is not the princes of mankind only, or the leaders of the people, who have now to find ready access to the salvation of Jesus; but the multitude, the poor, the unlearned, the workers, the little children: for it was prophesied that in the latter days the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth like the covering waters of the sea (*Isaias xi. 9*).

But where are the men? Who are they who shall be perfect enough to carry the Ark of the new Covenant? Where shall the Lord Jesus find among the weak and the sinful children of Adam men strong enough, men pure enough, men unworldly enough to stand in His own place?

The history of the Christian Priesthood and of its visible Head is too well known to be dwelt upon at this moment. Let us only say this:—It sprung up amid miracles, it grew and spread in the power of its inherent gifts, and it exists to this day in the undiminished vigour of its divine prerogatives. The Prophets, long centuries before the day of Pentecost, foresaw its rise. “You shall be called the priests of

the Lord, to you it shall be said, Ye ministers of our God" (*Isaias* lxi. 6). It was the Spirit of the Lord Who was to send them forth; and the Lord said, "I will make their work in truth, and I will make a perpetual covenant with them" (*Ib.* lxi. 8). When the time came, the Lord Jesus drew a band of His followers around Him on the hill of Olives, whence He was soon to be lifted up out of their sight. "Go and teach," He said; "make disciples of all nations—I am with you all days, as long as this world shall last." He bids them farewell; and in a few days more takes place the stupendous sign and visitation of Pentecost. That day was the day of the giving of power and might. That was the day when a new force, not allowed for in earthly science, was added to the motive forces of the universe. The band of men, upon whom has come that which will shake the towers of the earth and move its mountains and seas, descend first into the crowded streets of the festival time, to begin their resistless work. Three thousand souls yield to the word of Peter, and are added to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. As if the thunders and lightnings of another Sinai were in their midst, the people of Judæa and Jerusalem gaze with fear and wonder on these God-inspired men. Then from that sacred soil where Jesus had passed His life, their sound goes out into the whole world. Wonder-working Apostles descend, as from the heavens, into the strongholds of heathenism, challenge the superstition of ages, lead captive entire nations. By the time they have finished their work, and laid their

bones, as the seed of mercy and the pledge of future grace, in the soil of their adoption, Peter has seized upon Antioch and Alexandria and Rome, the queen-cities of the civilised world ; Paul has built up the edifice of his theology ; and the coasts of the Mediterranean and the islands are in the hands of men on whom have been laid the Apostolic hands which were filled with power in the upper chamber of Jerusalem. These men, as they press on, winning ground foot by foot, can heal diseases and cast out devils ; and before one hundred years have passed away from the coming of Jesus Christ, not Jerusalem only, not the vicinity only of the upper chamber, and not merely the remote and dim countries where a Thomas or a Matthew preached, but the life and wealth and learning of Rome and Greece have turned to gaze upon this inrush of miracle-aided men who call themselves the Body of Christ and claim powers and gifts far beyond the miracles which all the world can see.

The glory of miracles passed away in great measure from the Christian Priesthood, and died out. But it was no slight miracle that they still went on making the world their own. There were two Divine gifts which they had, though each was subject to different laws. The gift of "character," sacramental powers, and Divine mission belonged to them by the imposition of hands. From Bishop to Bishop was passed on the fulness of the Priesthood. Its exercise might here and there be justly limited ; for that band of men had a real Head, otherwise it would have been a mob and not an army. But it was from Christ, through Bishops,

that the Episcopate received its orders, its sacramental gift, and its radical jurisdiction. Armed with these, it spread itself out to form flocks everywhere, and it gathered itself together to speak to the world with the voice of Christ. It represented, in the midst of a world of luxury, sin, violence, and suffering, the invisible world of faith, love, purity, and Christian courage. To universal empire, it opposed another universal empire—that of Christ. No king was high enough to claim exemption from its laws; no brute force or material mass but had to make way for it. No philosophy but had to be modified to agree with its dogma. The very face of the earth began to be affected by its advance. Each man of that divinely-endowed host set up his chair of teaching and his altar of ministry on some spot where his clergy might stay around him and his flock might gather at his feet. Over that altar and that throne arose the roof of a Church which expressed and symbolised the universal Church itself. There was the infallible Word, there the awful Sacrifice, there the Saviour's fountains of the Sacraments. The divisions of the land began to be named after these Churches of the Bishop's Chair; and, with whatever drawbacks of failure, calamity, and apostasy, the civilised world at this day is divided among the Bishops, in whom lives that spirit of power given all those centuries ago by God the Holy Ghost.

The Episcopate had, and it has, another gift—that of the sanctifying grace of the same Holy Ghost, especially given and adapted for the work it had to do. This grace was not bound up with the Apostolic succes-

sion. Alas! it was possible to be a Bishop and yet to be a bad man. In Asia, in the times of John himself, do we not read of the "Angel of Ephesus" that he had fallen from his first charity; that he of Sardis had the name of being alive and was dead; and that he of Laodicea was wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked? Such unhappy men there have always been, and are, and will be to the end. That a Bishop has not in his soul the sanctifying grace of God is for him the depth of misfortune; but for the flock of Christ his powers are the same, until he is removed by authority from his throne. But let us take the Episcopate throughout the Christian ages over the universal world. Who were before them in facing the rack and the wild beasts? Who have lived more strikingly the life of the eight beatitudes and of the Sermon on the Mount? Who have devoted themselves more for souls? Who have died oftener for their flock? No body of men in all history. The men who attacked the rooted power of Paganism were the Bishops. The men who, by their learning and their writings, extinguished at once heathen philosophy and presumptuous heresy, were the Bishops. The men who disciplined barbarous peoples and stood by the cradle of great states, were the Bishops. If you travel over Europe and in Asia and Africa, you pass from shrine to shrine, from monument to monument, where lie the bodies of great Bishops, and where their names and memories are preserved. No principal city but has reason to be proud of the long line of its Pastors, coming down from him who first planted the Cross

upon its soil to the prelate who probably at this day, with all the holiness and the courage of his ancestors, is shepherding his flock and fighting against an anti-Christian State, or against the strong and subtle modern spirit which so ceaselessly attacks the Kingdom of God.

To-day we have the happiness of assisting at the laying of hands upon one who is to be made a Bishop. There are few here present who will fail to realise, in a certain degree, what is implied in the ceremony of this hour. A man is to take his place in the ranks of that divinely-endowed host which embodies the teaching and governing Church. There have been occasions when such men were pointed out by a miracle from heaven. If ever a clear indication of the will of the Almighty could be expected, it would seem to be for such a purpose as this. But, at any rate, there has been prayer, and there has been the labour of anxious counsel. This diocese has prayed for many weeks ; the counsels of its venerable pastor have been shared by all his brother Bishops ; the special advisers of the Supreme Pontiff have deliberated ; and at length the successor of St. Peter has spoken, and you have heard the words of his Apostolic Mandate. Thus are Bishops chosen. Thus, during all these Christian centuries, have prayer and deliberation, laboriously, painfully, diffidently, selected the men from amongst men who were to bear on their shoulders the Key of David. And in after years, when the Bishop who is to-day anointed shall be in the midst of his responsibility, and shall perchance be driven by his anxieties to cry out with the

Prophet, "Lord, it is enough for me! Take away my soul!" (3 *Kings* xix. 4), he will have no greater source of courage and comfort than to remember that he took not this thing upon himself, but was called by God, as Aaron was; for the voice of obedience is the voice of God (*Hebrews* v. 4). O blessed obedience to the Chair of St. Peter! Source of order, bond of peace, pledge of successful labour! At thy word, O Vicar of Christ, humble men, who know but too well their own weakness and their own deficiencies, put on armour to join in a battle of giants, and offer their breasts where the fiery arrows are flying thickest! Let St. Peter help us, to whom it was commanded that he should confirm his brethren! Let Christ, the Prince of Pastors, remember His promise and be always with us! There is nought else to trust to in this work of advancing Christ's kingdom. Money, power, influence, learning, human eloquence—what can all these together, even if the servant of Christ possess them, effect against the adversary and the world? His power must be from above. Now, as in the beginning, the wind of the Spirit must blow, and the fires of Pentecost must fall. Now, as when the Pagan idols were broken in pieces, must the Name of Christ be borne aloft; now must the word of Christ be our sword, the Sacraments our strength, and the Body of Christ our food, till we arrive at the Mount of God.

It is for these things that the Church prays in the beautiful and elaborate ceremony of the consecration of a Bishop. By expressive ritual and by touching

words, she signifies alternately her sense of the imperfection of man and of the power of divine grace. You will follow the words and actions of the consecrator. When he lays his hands, with his assistant Bishops, on the head of the elect, and then anoints him with the holy chrism, you will feel spiritual joy at the thought that another Bishop has been added to the army of witnesses for Christ. Thus the flock felt when the Apostles laid hands on Barnabas; thus, when some Pope ordained a Bishop in the secrecy and gloom of the Roman catacombs; thus, when at Canterbury, Augustine consecrated Justus and Mellitus; thus, during so many generations when in our English Metropolitan Cathedrals the great men were promoted to the Episcopacy whose names live over all this land. To be a Bishop then, and to be a Bishop now—how different it is, in how many ways! Now, a Bishop need not hide himself from the persecutors or the rabble; neither is he now a lord of the realm, like the prelate-princes of the ages of Faith. Now, he goes to and fro, rather passed over by the world than either stoned or idolised. Yet he is what he always was. O faithful flock! do you redouble your prayers that your Bishops may be known for what they are! Not that they may have again their revenues or their palaces, but that more and more of this generation may come to recognise the unction on their heads and the gift of God which is in their hands!

You will see the Book of the Gospels laid upon the shoulders of the new Bishop. It signifies the burden of his charge, which is, to carry the Kingdom of God

and the word of Christ for the sake of the flock. It signifies the whole of that revelation of Christ—that holy Catholic faith—which he is to try to force upon the world, that it may be saved. For he preaches not himself, but Christ; novelties, curious opinions, and startling views he leaves to the hireling, whose own the sheep are not. We read of the great Winfred, who was born in this region of Devon, and who, under the name of Boniface, carried the Gospel to so many peoples, that when Pope Gregory II. consecrated him Bishop at Rome in 723, the Saint wrote out with his own hand, and laid on the tomb of St. Peter, the full profession of his Faith. Now, as then, it is Christ's word which prevails, whilst philosophies wither and the wisdom of man perishes and disappears.

Then you see placed upon his head the Mitre of the high Priesthood. With that Mitre he will stand up before the flock—for many fruitful years, as we all pray—and preach and teach with authority the word of God. For God has endowed the Priesthood with authority, and His own divine revelation is dead and fruitless unless there be authority. The earth's multitudes crave for authority; and if they cannot find the high Priests of Christ's own sending, they make high Priests for themselves—make them out of any pretender, writer, journalist, lecturer, or advertising preacher, within the sound of whose voice they may find themselves. If Christ's revelation can only reach the world's busy millions through self-appointed teachers—and if that revelation cannot be adequately

apprehended until these teachers have agreed with one another—then there is no such thing as Christ's revelation. The only alternative to the confusion of Babel is the voice of the teaching Bishop, seated in the chair of the ancients, and wearing the mitre of the Apostolic succession.

Then he will kneel and grasp the Staff of his pastoral office; the Staff which reminds him of many a passage in the ancient Covenant in which the God of Israel reveals His everlasting love for the sheep of His pasture whom His Hand has created; a Staff which makes him think of the Good Shepherd—the One Shepherd, the true and loving Shepherd—Whom he can only hope to follow afar off; a Staff which is to him a symbol of his life's work and his heart's devotedness. Pray, my brethren, that God may fulfil His promise to Israel in the days of old when He said: "I will give you Pastors according to My own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine" (*Jeremias* iii. 15).

And finally, the newly consecrated Pontiff will receive the Ring of espousal, of fidelity, and of hope. It signifies that he is bound to his Master Christ, not merely as to his Creator, to his Father and Friend, and to his Redeemer, but as to the Prince and Head of that divinely organised band of men who are to go forth "conquering and to conquer"—the Apostolic choir, never failing, ever renewed upon the earth. He is a Knight of the Table of Christ, and his ring is the pledge of his loyalty. It is also the symbol of his faithfulness to his people—for to be loyal to Christ is

to live for Christ's little ones. And it carries a more august symbolism still—for it signifies the hope of the life to come. For what is fidelity to Christ but Faith—and what is Hope but Faith with eyes lifted to the Heavens? So should the Bishop walk. So amid difficulty and danger, amid struggle and defeat, in the uncertain twilight which is all that is vouchsafed to the most devoted of God's servants here below, should he trust and believe that God sees, God guides, God supplies; and God in the end will be his rest and his reward.

XVI.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

(Preached at the opening of the Church of the Passionist Fathers,
Highgate Hill, 21st November, 1892.)

“I saw in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like to the Son of Man, clothed in a garment down to His feet, and His breast girt with a golden girdle.”—*Apoc.* i. 13.

THE visions which John saw in Patmos were at once the visions of spiritual things and prophecies of what was to come. The prophets in the ancient times of Israel had spoken concerning the Christian times; but St. John saw Christ's dispensation. He had heard His words upon earth; he had felt His influence; and then, when the Lord had been taken away from the earth, he had been privileged to see behind the veil; to see the beauties of grace and the power of Divine things, to see the hidden sources of that universe of Divine communication, which is Christianity. Just as the angels look upon the hidden things of nature, and the laws whence flow the vicissitudes of earth and sky and ocean, whence the seasons follow each other and the storms arise, whence are the life and decay, the motion and colour of all things that make up the visible universe, so the Apostle of love saw the heavens opened, and God Almighty the Creator upon

His throne; he saw Him adored by the angels; he saw the Church of Heaven, he saw the Communion of Saints; he saw the heavens receiving the holy ones; he heard the martyrs' cry; he saw all the secrets of Divine dispensation, and how Christ, from His rainbow-encircled throne, showered down graces upon man to the end—he saw, in one word, the power of the Incarnation upon the earth; and the central figure was the Son of Man, clothed to the feet with the garment of His humanity, surrounded by the radiance and girt with the gold of His Divinity.

On this day of the dedication of a Church—which is also the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—I desire to speak of a most remarkable feature in that Divine dispensation which we call Christianity.

The place of Mary in the Incarnation is one that is unique. Christianity would not be Christianity as we know it, and as our Lord wished it to be, without the presence and the office of His blessed Mother. You may have observed, in art, how one picture of an edifice—of a castle or a cathedral—differs from another. In one you will have the building isolated and bare—a mere architectural drawing. In another there is the same building, but set amid its surroundings, with a landscape and an atmosphere which impress the imagination and call up a hundred interesting associations. So it is that He Who came to save us has left us a Christianity fashioned and settled by Himself. He came to redeem and save; and in order to save, He enlightens, He attracts, and

He transforms the souls of men. But He is not alone. He is surrounded by agencies which draw all their power from Himself. He first forms His Saints, and then He bids them co-operate with Him in His work. If He came to draw us to worship and to love by the attractions of His humanity, those attractions are scattered over thousands of living and beating hearts which translate them into a thousand tongues, so that none ever can fail to understand. If the loving contemplation of Himself is a force which transforms men to His likeness, He is the central abyss and mighty cataract, whose darkness and whose thunder fascinate the reason and the imagination. But He is also the source of a thousand rivers which roll through the land, and the waters of them all are impregnated with the fragrance of the powers of the Cross.

But of all the ministries which reveal and carry out the Incarnation's aims and reveal the Saviour of the world, of all the attractions which draw men to Him, of all the King's attendants whom He has invested with some of His own gift of transformation, there is one creature who stands far in advance of all the rest. Holy Scripture and antiquity, and the present practice of the overwhelming majority of Christians, prove that it is an essential part of the religion taught by Christ to place the Most Holy Mary on a pedestal apart from every other human being. The epithets and phrases of Christian antiquity may be read in books, whilst the present convictions of the Church display themselves in ways innumerable. The idea and principle involved in our view of the Lord's

Mother are easy and simple, and easily stated. She has been made a distinct universe or world of redeeming grace. There are peculiarities in the redemption of the Most Holy Mary which make her stand out grandly and differently from all the army of the redeemed. For she is redeemed not as one who is snatched from the fire or flood, but who is met by an angel and borne away before the flames come nigh or the waters' roar is heard. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is one of those bright heavenly streams of revelation which the instinct of a Christian absolutely welcomes with rapture; it finds no obstacles in a heart which has any grasp of the Incarnation. For wise reasons, even after Calvary, the mass of men were to be born without God's supernatural friendship and without a title to the Heaven of beatific vision. But Christ's Mother was to be born "all holy". As the ancient Fathers say, all the beauty that Christ's Blood could give her was hers; she was God's friend, and child, and minister, untouched by the enemy, unstained by the shadow of evil. The spirit of the Immaculate has never been the scene of a battle. It came into existence serene and peaceful, as a ship glides in the morning light from the safe harbour into a tranquil sea with a glow upon her sails from the sun which shall never set in all her happy voyage. In her was to be no conflict, no war of the flesh against the spirit. Mary was to walk through the world Immaculate—no stain on her purity, no dross in her charity, no obstacle to her love of God. There was in her no barrier to grace.

Her Immaculate Heart was a Paradise with an open gate, and the Lord entered in, and her whole will and heart received Him. There sweet things sprang up and grew and blossomed ; and as they grew, they flung out new roots and multiplied a thousand-fold. So that it requires very little arithmetic to prove that the spiritual state of Mary, Mother of God, was beyond all human reckoning or description. We read of wise men who scan the heavens—and as they come upon the track of some great star or lose themselves in distances and magnitudes, they sometimes pause in fear and terror, so appalling are the results to which the elements of their reckoning seem to point. It is thus with him who follows up to their results the principles which Catholic theology has laid down about Mary, Mother of God.

We may safely assert that whatever God does in the dispensation of the Incarnation, He does for the whole world. If the Incarnation was revelation and attraction and transformation, so was to be the grandest effect of the Incarnation, the soul of the Mother of God. Mary was to translate to men the power of Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, and Calvary. It is no slight circumstance in the Incarnation that the Incarnate was to have a Mother. Christ has been an infant. His Mother has watched over Him as mothers watch their babes. For months and years He has helplessly depended upon her, for longer years still He has lived by her side and grown up in her sight, revered her, helped her, obeyed her, called her Mother. At His death she stood by the Cross and heard His

last words ; and when His Spirit was given she sat among the Apostles. Here was a real man with a human career and human belongings, a human history and a human heart. By His coming He wished to seize upon men's fancy and men's feelings, and one part of His plan was to be born of a Mother, and to live beside her. To those who refuse to see this Mother, His own personality becomes dim and shadowy. He becomes a philanthropist, a reformer, a visionary, the legendary hero of a myth. For those who recognise her, He is the Messiah, miraculously born, miraculously working, miraculously rising again, and miraculously acting on human spirits and bodies till the consummation of the world. Christianity is, therefore, guarded by the dogma of the Divine Maternity.

But observe how the circumstance of Christ having a Mother affects men in those mysterious but most real sympathies which play such a strong part in their moral lives. Religion rests on dogma, but it does not stop at dogma. Christ came to be the brother of humanity in order that all might follow Him. To take the limitation of mortality was much ; that the Infinite should stoop to be bound by space and time and matter, was much. But He took up poverty ; He took up suffering. It was part of His design for finding His way to our hearts. He did not dispense with any circumstance that was calculated to impress upon us that He could feel for us. And, to intensify that feeling, could He have done more for us than have a Mother ? For to be a son is to put one's human sympathy beyond a doubt, if that son be the All

Perfect. To be the Son of Mary means to be the son of a poor mother ; to have a home, but a very humble one ; to give and take human love, however that love might be sanctified ; to bear the yoke of human obedience and gentleness, which play a large part in making this world tolerable. Thus the Mother presses upon the world the humanity of God our Saviour.

But she no less effectively reveals to it His royalty. The Son and the Mother were poor, reviled, trodden down ; yet the Son was the God of Hosts, and the Mother was the grandest work of His redeeming grace. Observe the imperial munificence of His gifts. To all generations the lesson was to be read that from Christ alone can human nature receive its perfection. To all philosophers who were to discuss the true and teach the good, it was to be shown that the invisible influence of Christ's Blood was alone to lift men and women out of the mire of the earth. To all who loved mankind there was this revelation to be made, that in the larger life of the complete existence which eternity implies, Christ's grace alone was dignity, and honour, and wealth, and everlasting happiness. It is no wonder that the world, or all that is spiritual in the world, yields her a love and honour which are unlike what any other creature can claim. Short-sighted men, groping about in unlighted sectarianism, exclaim that we honour her as God. They cannot understand that the very principle of the reason why we honour her at all is that she is purely human ; and she is the type and exemplar of what humanity may come to when God pleases to consume obstacles in the fiery

stream of His grace. It is the royalty of Christ reflected in her to which the Christian world bows down. Yet royal she is herself, as every soul is royal which partakes of the royalty of the Redeemer; and in a sphere that is all her own she shines to teach the world, to help the world, to comfort the world.

There are, to my mind, especially three truths of Christ's Kingdom which most holy Mary, as understood and venerated by Catholic tradition, keeps before the human race. The first is Humility, or lowliness, by which I mean the spirit of God's service and obedience to all for God's sake; a spirit which we may call the essentially Christian spirit: "Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus" (*Phil. ii. 5*). But Jesus, though humble and obedient as man, is also the Infinite, in Whose hand are the thunderbolts, in Whose power are the keys of death and hell. Mary is a creature, and she, whose name is whatever is most beautiful, most noble, most powerful, most royal, is the humblest and the most obedient. Yes, for humility is to serve God with all one's being; and God takes care of His servants. Thus humility, in the Christian sense, must triumph; this is the great lesson of human activity.

The next is Purity. The grand principle of the usage of things temporal is, Be not defiled by anything in this world; and the grand effect of this redeeming grace in Most Holy Mary was to make her incapable of defilement by the things through which she was to pass. And this immunity was from grace, not from nature. And men and women lift up their

eyes to this Queen of Purity for example and for help. The same grace which purified her being and strengthened her will may work similar effects, in their degrees, upon all Christ's children. The Christian ideal is so to guard and school the heart that neither the lust of the eyes, nor the lust of the flesh, nor the pride of life, may contaminate what belongs to God. And in a generation like this, is not the Virgin of all Virgins a light and an influence that we cannot do without?

The last is Suffering. No love of God is ever intense without suffering. The most pure of creatures, the nearest to God, free from temptation and full of grace—she had to suffer the most. Nothing was imperfect in her, nothing kept her immaculate heart from God. Yet she had to suffer—to suffer all those sufferings which are implied in her constant presence at the sufferings of Christ. The ideal of the *Mater Dolorosa* has kept the purest hearts in this world from misunderstanding how love becomes perfect. Those who have sinned can understand that they ought to suffer, and they find no difficulty in welcoming the atonement of pain. But the pure and the sinless cannot, without spiritual insight and some example like that of the sinless Virgin Mother, comprehend what suffering can do for them. They cannot so easily lift themselves up to the conception of suffering as intensifying the acts of the most innocent of hearts.

Then the Mother of Sorrows rebukes, with her own gentle example, the soft, the cowardly, and the frivolous. She moderates even innocent joy, and

preaches the Cross of Christ. To more spiritual hearts she offers the Crown of Thorns and the stigmata. And here, as in other things, she presents to the world in her person that ideal which is the safeguard of the true Christian view. And thus her throne stands evermore where Christ placed it when He made her His Mother. To that throne the eyes of the Christian world turn evermore, to learn and study what is the pure and perfect result and outcome of Christ's teaching.

Let no one marvel if the language which is used by Catholics to describe the spiritual prerogatives and the perfection of the Mother of Jesus Christ is sometimes most emphatic and apparently excessive. Human speech is built up, for the greater part, of visible and sensible analogies. The accent of devotion is largely tinged with that influence which we call imagination and fancy. But it is sometimes difficult to picture or to describe even material things in a language of this kind. The most vivid fancy cannot make a picture of the ocean beyond the first few miles, or of the skies beyond the threshold of the starry spaces. So it is with Mary. Making due reservation of the sense in which words are applied to the Infinite and to Him alone, you can assert all that is great and royal of Mary, and in most instances you will fall far short of the truth. If we call her our Life, our Sweetness, and our Hope, these epithets carry us but a short way towards what she truly is. If all the glowing names and titles of St. Alfonso are given to her, they are only like the words which thickly fringe the coast-line of some great continent, which show where man

has set his foot, but tell us nothing of the vast unexplored interior. Therefore let her children sing her praises and her preachers enumerate her attributes; they will not finish them all before the consummation comes. From age to age her glory must grow, as the Church becomes more conscious of all that is meant by the Incarnation. From Pontiff to Pontiff there must be handed down clearer definitions. Saint after saint must open new vistas of glory. In every age the faithful must be cheered and brightened with devotions, old and new. Let no one despair if the Help of Christians seems to stand aloof from the Christian conflict at this time or at that. The rosaries of the faithful will bring Christ back in His own time, even to the Europe that now is. This very age has witnessed Christian triumphs as great as those in which the Turk was routed and heresy beaten back. Have we not seen the Roman Pontificate lifted up in all the glory of a long martyrdom? Do we not see the Episcopate of the world purer and more loyal than in any age? Are not the Catholic populations beginning at last to understand what they might do if they would bestir themselves? The rest will follow, if God please.

Meantime, for every step of progress through Mary's prayers, we should thank her on this her feast. We keep to-day the ancient festival of her Presentation in the Temple. As she offered her soul, her body, and her faculties, so by the virtue of that supreme offering she rules, by the will of Jesus, the great temple of the Church. This new Church, which we dedicate to-day,

is an offering, a symbol, and a grace. The type of all human offerings, after the Heart of Jesus, is the offering—so intense and so absolute—of Mary's most pure heart to her Creator. May she bless and spiritualise the hearts of those who have made sacrifices for this House of God; may she inspire increased sacrifice and further offerings. For when you build up the walls of a Church you build up the Church of God, which is symbolised, and lives, in every Christian temple. Of her it is written, "Blessed shall they be who build thee up" (*Tobias* xiii. 16), for here is the Lord's House and the Saviour's fountains. Here is Christ, Who speaketh and healeth and breaketh Bread, as on the shore of the Galilæan lake, in the porch of Sion's temple, in the chamber of the last loving Supper. Here prayers will be made for believers and unbelievers. Here the Sacrifice of infinite power will go up day by day. And let us pray that grace may spread from this place over all this city and all the land. Once a prophet prayed on the top of Carmel, and a little cloud arose out of the sea; and presently the burnt and dying earth was visited by the life-giving rain. Christian tradition has always seen in that cloud the type of Mary, Mother of God. Here from the northern heights we look down on the spiritual desolation of the greatest city in the world. Shall not the prophets pray, shall not priests and people turn this way and that; shall not the cry of the Blood of Jesus ascend to heaven until Jesus, through Mary's prayers and Mary's ministry, sends down the rains of His mercy?

XVII.

HELP FROM ABOVE.

(Preached in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, 8th December, 1891.)

“The hand of our God is upon all those that seek Him in goodness.”—1 *Esdras* viii. 22.

IT is natural that those who believe in a spiritual world should seek for ways to communicate with spirits. The Christian, the Catholic, knows that there lies, just outside of the sphere of his senses, a universe so immense and so marvellous that human language cannot describe it by pictures and ideas, but only by symbols. That universe is the court and empire of God the Infinite, of which He Himself is the light and the life; a light in which is known the secret of all science and of all duration, of all heights and of all abysses; a life in which to live is to be rapt in ecstasy, and yet to use all the powers of individual being as swift birds use their pinions. This realm out of sight is peopled by those who have been tried, and who, by the grace of Christ, have been found faithful and true. With God they live and reign. What He has belongs to them, so far as it can be communicated. Each of them, whether he be angel or blessed spirit, is a prince, a warrior, a companion of

the Lord's table, even a participator of His throne. With God, they make up a universe which even the imagination of man, assisted by the limited, but immortal, power of his spiritual reason, can conceive as embracing and encircling this poor earth of ours as some Pacific Ocean stretches its vast brightness round a dark and solitary rock. It would seem, at first sight, as if an earthly probation, a pilgrimage of danger and conflict, were impossible in the neighbourhood of such a world as we know Heaven to be. It is a world of our friends, who not only love us, but are strong enough to save us from every trouble. It is the kingdom of our Father, God. If there is anything that is absolutely certain it is that God loves man. What could have been the motive of the stupendous act of the creation of an immortal soul, except a longing desire—if we may, as we must, use human phrase—for its never-ending happiness? The grand revelation which the Incarnation has made is the revelation of a love which reason indeed knew to exist, but which needed to be proclaimed in accents which the heart and the sense could understand. The Catholic doctrine of sanctifying grace is that the Holy Spirit of Jesus is diffused within us, when we are born again, and that we live thereby as if Christ lived in us. This expresses a closeness of communion with the very being of God which could never have been vouchsafed were not God's love for us as deep as His very Godhead. As far as we know the Infinite God, all His external manifestation has been for the interests of human beings—at least, since the angels stood their

trial. He loves us; there is the great unassailable fact, fountain and source of a thousand rivers of divine science. But, for the moment, this very truth, so essential and so strengthening, is our difficulty. When He loves us all so truly, how can He refrain from interfering in the world below? The same question may be asked about the citizens of His heavenly kingdom. They see as He sees, and will only as He wills. The great ends and purposes of the universe, as God has them in His vision, are also recognised with rapture by the Angels and the Saints. Thus the interests of the souls of men kindle flames of zeal unquenchable in all those who look upon the vision of God. As He loves men, they love; as He works, they would work; as He communicates Himself, speaks, helps, and cherishes, so would they pour out all the ardour and activity of their glorious beings for the sake of the true well-being of a single soul. Yet on this earth we see little of them; we seldom hear the faintest echo of their speech. Souls plod on through the "way" of this world, and the skies above never part asunder to give a glimpse of the courts of Sion. Souls encounter danger, and oftentimes must fight with deadly enemies; and no angelic sword flashes out to help them. Souls fall, and faint—nay, die; and still there is silence in the air, and the multitude of the heavenly army make no sign, but leave the poor stricken brother to the solicitude of those as heavily burdened as himself.

It need not be said that God, and the Angels, and the Saints, do interfere for the welfare of men

below. The Divine communication of grace, whether habitual or actual, by which God, at the intercession of Most Holy Mary, and most frequently of some other saint as well, works upon this earth and shepherds the sheep, giving them water, and a table even in the desert—this is not a rare and extraordinary act of power, but the ordinary dispensation of His love. Equally certain, as a point of faith, is the communion of the angels. The “Seven Spirits of God” seem to designate a vast class of powerful angels who put in motion the whole of this lower universe, watching over matters corporal and spiritual. Each member of the human race, from his birth to his death, has the guardianship of a heavenly spirit, who offers to God his prayers and good works, who intercedes with God to accept mortal services, who stirs up the mind and heart to love of God and sorrow for sin, who puts happy occasions of virtue in the way of men, delivers them from dangers, checks the power of the demon, mitigates the violence of temptation, helps us even in our temporal needs, chastises us for our correction, and stands by us at the hour of death; who, moreover, receives the soul after judgment, and comforts it amid the expiations of purgatory. What the angels do, the Saints also do. Faith, indeed, does not, in regard to the Saints, define so much as it does with respect to the holy angels. That they pray for us we know. That they dispense God’s grace in a thousand different ways—sending good thoughts and good desires, helping us in danger spiritual and corporal, quelling the evil spirits, and assisting us at the

hour of death—this also we can gather with certainty from the whole course of Catholic tradition. There is one, moreover, who, as she is the Queen of angels and of saints, so also is by excellence the Protectress and the Patroness of men. Her fulness of grace, bestowed upon her by the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, was intended to overflow upon all men. There is no thought, word, or deed, which lifts the soul from earth to God, which is not the fruit of Mary's intercession. There is no exertion of the spiritual nature, no act of spiritual life, which does not come from her mediatory fulness. "In me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis:" these words are cited by St. Thomas of Aquin, as a description of our Lady's prerogative. Neither is there any danger or trouble in which her power cannot help and save mortal men. "From her," to apply the verse of Canticles, "from her hang a thousand shields." This also is the citation of the Angel of the schools. The Tower of the thousand shields—the Tower of David, who is Christ—is the recognised type of the protecting power of the Queen of Heaven and earth. There is no age in which Christians have not expressed in their deeds as in their invocations their Catholic sense of the absolutely unique and universal patronage of Mary, Mother of God. Church history is full of it. We read it in the names of churches, in the lines of liturgies, in the eulogies of the Fathers, in the expositions of Doctors, in the practices and exhortations of the Saints. The Virgin Mother is the friend of man, because she is the nearest to that God Who made and redeemed man and Who longs to have man at His feet

in Heaven. She loves mortal men and women, her own fellow-citizens, because she sees with God's eyes, and because her heart beats in unison with the Sacred Heart which offered itself upon the Cross. Whatever her Son has given her, He has given her for the world's sake. It is true, His own glory is His sufficient end and motive—the first and principal motive. But, as He has laid aside all considerations of His own glory when dealing with man, and has annihilated Himself in order to save man, so all those lavish gifts of His which have gone to form that universe of magnificence which is the soul of the Blessed Mother of God, are for man and for man's salvation. "O Mother of Mercy," cries St. Bernard, "the restless and unstable world is under thy feet! It trusteth to thee, and with devout appeal prayeth thee to be its intercessor with the Sun of Justice, Who loved thee above all others!"

This description of the loving interest which the world of spirits takes in the souls of us who dwell upon the earth is but feeble, and falls far short of the reality, and yet it is most true that the longings and aspirations of the hearts of men are not contented with it. They seek for something more. They find themselves wondering why God and His blessed ones do not make themselves habitually seen and felt upon the scene of this lower world. They are impatient that evil should be so triumphant and good so trodden under foot, that the Divine order should be so disturbed, the innocent led astray, and the wicked left unpunished in their sins. It is an ignorant if a

natural impatience. For God has set limits to His might; He has tied His hands. Probation and merit would be impossible if God did not hold Himself out of sight; because if God were the sun in the heavens and the air in which we live, free-will would be impossible; and to a rational creature the exercise of free-will, at least during some period of its existence and as a probation, seems to follow from the very fact of its creation. In other words, God could not both create an order like this world and reveal His face in the midst thereof; and if probation is to be the rule, and if the overpowering Presence of the Creator is therefore *not* to be the rule, then we can easily understand that the period of probation, which, in the instance of man, consists of the years of a lifetime, must be a period when the world of spirits is cut off from men—closed, silent, and remote. As it is with the Creator, so it is with His glorified princes and ministers. Men have prayed for the Angels to interfere, but they have not interfered; although, as in that moment when, if ever, it would have seemed that the burning zeal of the army of St. Michael should have poured down like a tempest on the hills of Sion (*Matt.* xxvi. 53), the legions are ready and willing and terrible in their strength, only awaiting the command of God. But the earth must run her course. No catastrophe, no earthquake, no deluge, no visitation of fire or death, must anticipate the last day of all. Such things have been—only when some new order began some new creation, as it were; as when Noe led forth a new race, or Abraham heard that a whole civilisation

had perished with Sodom, or Moses cut himself off from Egypt for ever.

Nevertheless—and here I come to the great truth which is indicated in the text I have used—between these two pillars of Divine Providence—between God's fatherly love on the one hand and His awful hiddenness and silence on the other—there is a way out to a wide and unexplored sea; a sea that is peaceful and safe, and full of joyful surprises to all who believe in God, in Providence, and in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

It is not difficult to understand what is meant by the Hand of the Lord. It means that God has His own ways of making His presence felt. In spite of His decree that He should hide His face, He is in reality very near; and His anxious mercy forces Him from time to time to stretch out His hand from the darkness beyond His ordinary Providence. And the Holy Spirit, in a simple word, tells us who it is that feels the Hand of God; they are those who "seek Him in goodness". What is meant by this? God is near; our heavenly patrons are near; the great Mother of Christ is near. How can we seek them, and find them? How can we make sure of an intervention over and above that which is according to the ordinary Providence of God? For there can be no doubt that Catholic tradition and the sense of the Church lead us to look for such special mercies. The revealed truth that there are guardian angels, and the absolute certainty that we are helped and protected by the Saints who are the patrons of churches, nations, families, and

individuals—from these things we can infer that Heaven is not so distant as it might appear to be, and that the army of our brethren in glory is far from being entirely without work to do on the battle-ground of the earth.

What we look for and dare to hope for is not miracle. Miracles are possible, and miracles happen. They are striking interferences, visibly or perceptibly, outside the power of natural law. They are intended to demonstrate the truth of religion, to prove the sanctity of the servants of God, or to turn men's eyes upon His Church. Yet the mercies, which are at once more than God's ordinary action, and less than technical miracles—the mercies which are the effect of special Patronage—are an interference in nature, and may, if we choose, be called miraculous. They follow a certain law, which, as we shall see, can be ascertained with some certainty. They are, in many instances, such effects as God alone could produce, whether they are extraordinary graces or help in the visible order. Yet they are, for the most part, unnoticed by the world at large—peaceful, silent, hardly causing a break in the flow of life's incessant stream. They are like the shy good deeds of some powerful benefactor, who blesses and cheers many a humble household, yet shrinks from showing his face or disturbing the work and the routine of the day. For the patronage of our patron Saints and the tutelage of the angels never cease; yet they never proclaim themselves aloud. The child is brought to holy Baptism; the headstrong youth is strengthened against tempta-

tion and guided to his vocation ; souls in the long struggle of life are armed against the triple foe, or held within the fold of Christ, or lovingly assisted in the passing of the perilous strait of death. How many dangerous visitants are kept away from the road we travel ! How often does invisible help carry us over some momentous crisis of our career ! There is no family but has its guardian, no flock which cannot count upon a powerful patron, no diocese which may not look up to a glorious Bishop, or martyr of the past ; no kingdom for which ancient faith has not chosen a protector ; nay, the universal Church herself, as the bark of St. Peter labours in the troubled seas, and he who holds the Master's place is bowed beneath the cares and sorrows of his office, how often does she feel the storm decrease in violence and the waves grow less ; and how plainly to be seen is the opening of the heavens and the vision of Michael, or Joseph, or Peter, or the apparition in the gloom of Mary, Mother of God !

To me, it seems that this "seeking" of the Lord in "goodness," which is the condition on which man is promised that special communion with God, the angels, and the saints, which is described by the expression the "Hand of the Lord," expresses one of the deepest truths of the Christian life.

Human nature stands in need of God's visitation and gift ; of redemption, grace, help, consolation ; God is as willing as He is powerful to do all with His own right hand ; but man must *turn to Him* ; man must seek Him, man must avert himself from that in which

God is not. In other words, the human heart can do little to help itself, but it always has sufficient grace to turn to God; to turn feebly, it may be, but veritably; imperfectly, but really—with some kind of beginning of love, and with a genuine, if weak, detestation of all that God is offended by. It is truly not much as to any positive achievement, but it is what the Redeemer is satisfied with. The lost sheep is not required to rise and walk; it is hardly expected to be able to stand upon its own feet; but it must not resist; it must turn the slightest pleading look to the Good Shepherd, with unfeigned regret for the sin of its straying away—and He does the rest; He takes it on His shoulders and carries it home. The subject here is not the obtaining of sanctifying grace; it is the deservings of the patronage and intervention of the heavenly powers. But the same principle holds good. To make sure of the special mercies of patronage there is a condition necessary which in itself could accomplish for the pilgrim of the earth very slight results; which is easy, quite within our reach, but which is perhaps more of a secret than it ought to be even amongst the children of the Faith in a country like this.

There is, as every Christian knows, a virtue—a disposition—a child-like turning of the heart to God, which is called Piety. The word has many sides. It is at once a disposition of the soul and a gift of the Holy Spirit. It denotes an attitude of the human spirit to God; but it also names God's dispositions towards men. In God, it means that fatherly love by

which He has created and redeemed us, and evermore watches over us. In man, it signifies that loving, filial spirit by which we respond to the never-failing goodness of God ; that spirit by which we cling with faith and confidence to our Father, God ; to our Redeemer, Christ ; to Christ's Mother, Mary ; to the angels and the Saints, to our holy mother the Church, and to every person, every dispensation, every rite, every place which has any connection with our last end and our redemption. Piety is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. When the fulness of that Holy Spirit was poured out upon the human soul of Jesus, that name of Piety was revealed as one of seven which were used to convey to human intelligence some idea of that ineffable and most mighty communication of supernatural grace to finite natures, which is the work of the Divine Spirit of God. Piety, therefore, was, and is, a part of the holy magnificence of the sacred Humanity. From that Humanity it overflows on men and women ; and Piety is part of the grace and supernatural heroism of the saints. All who are in God's grace possess the seven gifts, and therefore Piety is a permanent endowment of the soul which rises fresh from Baptism or Penance to face the world and its dangers.

But there is nothing more mysterious than the deadness in which stupendous gifts lie in the human soul. Endowments, real and living, which are strong enough to produce heroic sanctity, do often remain buried and unused, like the sphynxes and temples of Egyptian deserts, with the sands of desolation silted up around

them, only a head or a column left visible to show that something greater still lies below. Thus there are many to whom that gift of Piety was given in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation, who but feebly show its effect in the living action of their souls. Yet Piety is the secret of communication with the spiritual world.

Explore, my brethren, the regions of your own souls—lands too little known, far too desolate, far too neglected and forlorn; but rich all the time in what the redeeming grace of Christ has planted there. Remove the soil which the ceaseless winds have heaped up in the years gone by. Understand what the Holy Spirit has given you; make that little turn towards God which can be made at any moment of the longest wandering, at any point of the darkest path, at any hour of the deepest night; begin to seek the Lord; make that slight conversion which places the heart with its face towards Sion; then your grand spiritual endowment will begin to play—like some great machine when a little gate has opened a way to the strength of the mighty stream—and you will find yourself in communion with those who love you.

For Piety is first of all Faith. There is but one apprehensive faculty, which, like a spiritual hand, can reach out beyond the bounds of the visible, out into the darkness of the great universe of intelligence, and make the things which there live and move the very property of these hearts of ours. There is but one gift which can turn into solid substance such as can satisfy human hearts, the spiritual forms, the super-

natural forces, the bewildering promises and possibilities of that unknown world. Christian Faith which is not a mere mode of grasping the intelligible, but is a Divine gift and endowment by which we first of all hear God's voice, as God's, and next cling with devotion to God even more than we listen to Him speaking—Christian Faith is the rock on which Piety must stand to lift her hands to her heavenly Father. If Faith be given fair play, Piety must be the result—Piety in full energy and activity. For when Faith has fair play, there ensues that entire conviction, which is not of the reason only, or of the rational will, but is of the brain, the fancy, the sensibility, and the whole being.

Hence Piety lives best in the atmosphere of a truly Christian country. When Divine things have been impressed upon a human heart, then Piety flourishes. When the child has been so imbued with the fragrance of Christ's Divine life that all His words and His whole example are closely associated with its very thought and growth, then you may look for Piety. When the fogs and the chills of doubt do not visit the zone of the life that is lived, then Piety grows. When the heart and the spirit are not exposed to the questionings, the sneers, or the vicious assaults of the carnal intellect, then Piety expands. Where the deadly malaria of religious indifference does not contaminate the air, there Piety cheers the eye. Where the school were Catholic, the family Catholic, society Catholic, literature Catholic, the daily influence of the press Catholic—there, if such conditions could be

found, would Faith receive her full development, and Piety be strong, intelligent, and deep. For there would be evident the "Sacrament of Piety"—as St. Paul calls the Incarnation; there, in the clear sunlight of the Church's teaching and practice, would the spirit of man be ever face to face with that manifestation of God in the flesh—that preaching of Jesus at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, at Calvary—which was intended to take complete possession of all human thought and feeling, and to make man live for God alone. We may sigh for conditions of life in which it were possible, in which it were easy, to be pious. In the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Piety is useful to all things" (1 *Timothy* iv. 8). Piety has the promise not only of the world to come, but of this world also; for whilst all other "exercises," as he says, are comparatively unprofitable, Piety is the intensity and continuousness of the soul's tendency to its last end.

But whilst the heart longs, the will must labour—the courage of religious desire must make use of all the means at hand. No man can be at once pious and worldly, pious and sensual, pious and indifferent to Christ's dispensation on earth. From the moment a man sets his foot on the threshold of life and responsibility, he is called upon to fence his path, to hew his way through obstacles, to arm himself, and oftentimes to flee away and save himself, in order that his Faith may have fair play, and his heart may expand in the Piety which is its flower and its fruit. How much does Piety depend upon condition! How many fail to love God and God's saints with familiar filial love,

because the disbelief of modern life dims the eyes and half paralyses their powers ! And to how many, who have God's heavenly gifts, is the communication of the special mercies of Heaven cut off, because they have not learnt the secret of treating God as their heavenly Father, Jesus as their loving Saviour, Mary as their solicitous Mother, the Saints as their very own family bound to them with every fraternal bond of interest and love !

But if the light and softness of true Catholic Piety have been given to the heart, then the heart has the gift of making that little turn to heavenly things, which has the power to lift the veil between Heaven and earth. It has the gift of pious Prayer and pious Practice. These things are enough. God and His Saints are ready to do the rest. Pious prayer is not so common as those two simple words might lead us to infer. For prayer, in order to be pious, must be penetrated with the filial love of God, revealing Himself in the Incarnation, and speaking to us through the Church. Prayer which would address God and leave out any portion or development of the Christian dispensation, cannot be pious, because it would not recognise God's loving kindness. This does not mean that at times one may not in prayer dwell on the attributes of the Deity. What is said is spoken of prayer in general. Piety directs the elevation of the heart to Jesus in His life and death, to Mary, whom Jesus has made a part of His dispensation, to the Saints, whom He has made sharers in His work and partakers of His table. It seems to feel with every

fibre of sensibility the life, glory, power, and office of Jesus the King, of Mary, and of all the heavenly citizens. As friend would speak to friend, so Piety speaks to these friends so royal and so strong—speaks, confides, pleads, and is confident. Cold and calculating respect is not enough. The head must bow, the heart must be warm, the hand must be ready. The preacher must use a tongue which burns and flames. The shrine must claim all the flowers that the earth produces. The art and the wealth of this world must be lavished, if they are within reach, to express reverence and love. There must be the journeying of pilgrims from afar to inflame a devotion which can yet be true and efficacious though seas and continents intervene. There must be all that is best fitted to give a voice to the multiplied powers and faculties of humanity.

For to express Piety is to intensify Piety. To join oneself as a humble unit to the throng of the Pious is to purify childlike devotion; and to stand up as a soldier in the great Christian host and obey the watch-words which resound through time, transmitting the heavenly will; to cling to Christ and to His salvation, and to take His side with all our faculties against all that He Himself has come to destroy—this, as it seems to me, is what the Holy Spirit means by “seeking the Lord in goodness”—this filial affection of a pious heart turned towards Christ and His holy persons and holy things.

I have called it a secret; because in comparison with its simplicity there are so few who think of putting it in practice. It is this, and nothing else

which places mortal men in holy communication with the spiritual world. It is this which opens the heavens—which sets free the powers of the heavenly kingdom, and the hands of Mary herself. It is this which restrains the spirits of evil, who, as we may not question, do at times exercise influence undefined in places of this earth where the Cross of Christ is not. Far be it from the Christian to use any means of communing with spirits, whether good or evil, except that piety grounded on faith, which brings down the benignant influences of the good spirits who love us, and so binds fast the malignity of those who might have a limited permission to attempt injury or scandal to our immortal souls.

And is there any limit to the special mercies of Jesus and the visitations of the blessed Saints whom Piety loves and invokes? Is it not clear that the patronage of Mary and the Saints is God's providential way, God's way of predilection, to give us grace and every blessing? Jesus made the Saints: "*Spiritus Ejus ornavit cœlos*" (*Job xxvi. 13*). The majestic creations of the spirit of Jesus, as they partake of His glory, so they share His power. And do you think sufficiently how they love us? What does St. Bernard say? "Doth the Kingdom of Heaven harden the hearts of its inhabitants, or rob them of their memory, or kill their kindly feelings? O my brethren, the wide heaven wideneth the heart instead of narrowing it; it doth not estrange, but quickeneth the sympathy; it doth not blight affection, but expandeth it. In the light of God the memory groweth

the clearer, not the more darksome; in that light things are learnt that were before unknown, but nothing is forgotten that was known already. The angels do not despise the earth because they inhabit the heavens; they visit and frequent it. They see the face of the Father, but that doth not make them neglect to be kind and merciful." And shall the angels hasten to and fro on their errands of succour, and those who are of our own kin neglect us, or fail to show compassion in those things wherein themselves have suffered? They who know no pain feel the pains of man, and shall they who have come out of great tribulation have no thought for that through which they have passed? There was one who said, "Me expectant justi, donec retribuas mihi" (*Ps. cxli. 8*). The just are waiting, waiting to see us attain to our eternal reward. They are waiting—waiting for the hearts of men to seek them and to take their bounteous ministrations.

Above all, most holy Mary waits. Throned in her glory, she seems to look lovingly for the Piety of men and women. In every Christian age that Piety has sought her, and she has poured her gifts upon every order and condition of those redeemed by her Son. This time in which we live has turned to her with new and warmer Piety. These generations have raised their hymns of praise to the mystery and glory of her Immaculate Conception; and a thousand dioceses and ten thousand churches have made her their especial Patron under that auspicious name. If she does not bless us—bishops, priests, fathers, mothers, young men,

maidens, little children—it is because we have not thrown ourselves into the stream of Catholic Faith, and given ourselves up to the childlike impulses of Catholic Piety. Let us make sure that, in days which resound with her praise, in a land which has been foremost in her honour, in a diocese which belongs to her, and I will say in a Church which glories in her name, we seek her, seek her trustfully, seek her habitually. O Mother of Mercy, turn those eyes of thine upon us! These are words which never fail to bring down on men, through Mary's power, the Hand of the Lord.

XVIII.

LIBERTY.

(Preached at St. Ann's, Spitalfields, 29th April, 1894.)

“The perfect law of Liberty.”—*St. James* i. 25.

THESE words are applied by the Apostle St. James to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are words that have met with very little belief or recognition from the world at large. The whole history of the world has been the search for Liberty in a different direction altogether. The Gospel has had rather the reputation of favouring the opposite. It has been called a slavery, and the Church has been subjected to names of the same kind, but harder still.

If ever there was a word which has been raised up on an altar and worshipped as an idol by the human race, that word is Liberty. I am far from saying there is not a good reason for that. But there can be no doubt that no word has ever stirred men's emotions—aye, and passions—like the word Liberty. It is the word which has inspired the revolutions of human history—and that history is largely composed of revolutions. It is the word which has shaped human philosophies; for when a thinker has given out that he has found out the secret of freedom, men have been drawn to his expositions. It has been at the root of

human "religions"; for the religious propagator has always undertaken to emancipate the mind, or the spirit, or the soul, or some enslaved side of our poor nature. Many of these heralds of Liberty have been knaves, charlatans, or fools. But wise men also, and good men, have aspired after Liberty. Not always the Liberty from mere earthly conditions or bodily shackles, but very often from the tyranny of invisible foes—from the slavery of the passions, the despotism of the world, the oppression of that material environment which weighs down the spirit and enfeebles the spiritual life.

Where is its root—this invariable human longing? Whence does it spring? It is another name for Self. Self is the separateness of a conscious being. I think—and I am not you, for you think with your own consciousness. I think—and that cuts me off from the whole world, as a rock is cut off by the sea flowing round it. I am myself. You are yourself. Every one is himself or herself. It is this separate self from self that is the root and spring of the aspiration after Liberty. For self objects to bounds or limits. That is the way it is made. In a certain sense this runs through all animate nature. A weed will kill a flower that springs too near it; a tree will destroy another tree; an animal will snatch and hold fast and fight. Every living thing wants its own, and wants its own way; because it is not a dead thing, but a compound of living forces which must have a clear scope, or they suffer. But when the living thing thinks, you have not only a living expansion, but a

conscious need, want, or appetite. I want to have a free field all round me; I want no encroaching surroundings to touch me; I want no one to stop me, no one to hold me, no one to bind me, no one to oppose me. Here is the root of Liberty, as a passion.

And now I think I hear some tell me that, this being so, Liberty is a holy aspiration, seated in the very inmost and most sacred recess of the nature of man; and that to blame, curb, or weaken this noble passion is a sin against human nature. We have heard this teaching. You will not expect me to agree with it. And I must explain why.

When a tree blossoms, forms its fruit, ripens it, and lets it drop into the lap of man, that tree has done its duty. Its nature, acting according to law, has achieved what it is its nature to achieve. Can you say the same of a human being? Ah! the problem is far more complicated there! Human nature, it is true, has many elements in it that are just as much a part of it as the productive forces of the tree. But human nature naturally wants many things, and naturally acts in various directions. The human spirit has its tendencies, its aspirations, its passions. Just as the sun, poised in the midst of our system, flings his rays into space in showers that never cease, so the little world or orb of a man's humanity goes on scintillating with its various activity on its surroundings. But human nature is something higher than the sun or the stars; something far more wonderfully made—far more complex—far more noble. Human nature can

choose! There is the difference. It is a difference as deep as the very roots of being.

For choice implies the knowledge of an end or purpose, the power of judging what is suited and what is not suited to attain that purpose, and the power of conscious direction, or intention.

A man's reason can find out without difficulty what is the ultimate and supreme end of his being. There is a light shining in the reason which only requires to be utilised to show us a vision which may be described as truth, justice, purity, immortality, God. You cannot have one star of this heavenly group without the others. I am made for truth, justice, and purity; but these things are independent of time, and these things, shining persistently as they do, mean an absolutely true, just, and pure Being somewhere outside of me. This constellation, like the cross in the southern skies, shines on through the night and down upon the waters of life's troubled sea. Sometimes clouds sweep across the sky, and it is lost to view. Sometimes the observer is not on the open deck with his eyes to the heavens, but shut in down below in slumber and forgetfulness. Sometimes the very reeling of the ship herself makes it hard to read what is overhead. But the higher ideals, and immortality, and God, are the heritage of humanity. The reason, which is the soul's power of looking up and looking forward and backward and all around—the reason can make sure of them. And thus the reason can make sure of the end and purpose for which it, and the soul in which it resides, exist and live. That

purpose is morality, eternity, and God. Morality—not narrow pride or short-lived passion, but the right, the just, the true, the holy. Eternity—for a being that is immortal can never carry out its destiny unless it finds that destiny beyond the bounds of time. And God—for as life and existence come from Him, so does this very light of reason; this consciousness of a high destiny; and as He has breathed it all into my breast, so it all exists in Him to begin with; and whatever is true is God's truth, whatever is pure is the image of His holiness, and whatever is just and right is the shining of His attributes upon humanity; so that to know one's last end is to know God Almighty. Here is one side of the stupendous difference which makes human faculties so impossible to gauge or measure by the measures of the earth. When the Angel was ordered to measure the heavenly Jerusalem (*Apoc.* xxi. 15) he made use of a reed of gold; and it is said (v. 17) that it was "the measure of a man, which is of an angel"; for it is only angelic measures that can measure the angelic powers of men.

But, next, the power of choice implies a knowledge and a selection of means. The end is to be attained by acts and steps. Of the thousands of thoughts, words, and deeds which may concur to form the warp and the weft of life, some are steps in the direction of the grand purpose, some are not, and some are steps in a path that leads another way altogether. It is the apprehension of this that gives the knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral, in the living through of a human life.

And this capacity of apprehension is accompanied by a corresponding power of mental direction or intention, resulting generally in an action or a course of action. If I understand what things are good and what bad, I can take up the good and leave the bad alone. That is the way I have to order my life—like a traveller who chooses his road; or like a treasure-seeker who picks out the gold and throws the dross back into the pit.

This view of life—which is the only one that philosophy can approve, to say nothing of revelation, or grace—must have a most marked influence on the way a man deals with his own nature. For there can be no doubt that a man's nature, such as we find it, does not by any means wholly and heartily help him to attain his last end, or to direct his life to it. Human nature is in many respects exceedingly perverse. As we experience it, not once but over and over again, we are inclined to think that it is rather adapted to wreck our last end than to promote it. Our nature urges us to a very low and degraded life; to a life of self-indulgence, covetousness, and unrestrained love or hate; a life in which self is the rule and measure. We have a score of passions, ready to flame, to flash and to scowl on the least occasion that offers. We feel a most disagreeable dead-weight when the higher life has to be lived, or the lower life shaken off. This side of human nature is an undeniable fact—just as the other side is. What is the explanation? Briefly this, as you know: first, human nature is made that way; and, secondly, on account of original

sin it is subject to greater blindness, lameness, and perversity than it would naturally have had to contend with. But this is not our present subject. We have the fact that our nature is in many respects in opposition to our last end—that is, to God's law and will. The immediate and inevitable consequence is, that our nature must, in very many ways, be met, checked, diverted, and if possible subdued.

It is not difficult to understand what effect this kind of reasoning must have upon our ideas about Liberty. Liberty may be, as people will tell you, a primary, native, deep and strong propensity or aspiration of a man's being. But there is no reason, in all of this, for its being left to assert itself without any control or direction from the sovereign power of reason. Because the ocean is a part of the grand framework and substance of this universe, it does not therefore follow that those who dwell in low countries should not build up dykes and barriers to save themselves from inundation. For what is Liberty, primitively? It is, as we have seen, the aspiration of self after room and comfort. But an aspiration of this kind, it need not be said, is, in a hundred ways, absolutely hostile to the last end, and to God's service. So that Liberty cannot be called an absolutely good thing—good for its own sake. Liberty, like an unbacked horse, would gallop with you to the precipice. Liberty, like a tempest, would beat you flat to the ground. Liberty, like unwatched fire, would burn down your house. Like any other primitive force of the universe, Liberty is blind, headstrong, unreasonable, and dangerous.

If this be so, would it not rather be true to say that the Liberty which answers to this unreasoning appetite of nature, is not true Liberty at all? For Liberty is a very noble word. It denotes a certain courage, a certain chivalry of spirit, a certain magnanimity of heart, which ought not to be associated with the idea of a blind appetite. It is a word which, in the revealed word of God, is sometimes used to express even what is divine: "Where the spirit of God is, there is Liberty" (2 *Cor.* iii. 17). These words of St. Paul are pregnant with meaning. They do not signify that there is no such thing as law, duty, or commandments. They mean, as St. Augustine expresses it, that God's spirit makes all righteous law, freedom; because God's spirit, when we have it, fills us with such clear insight and generous love, that we are no longer forced or driven, as by a taskmaster, to keep the commandments, but are borne to obedience as on the wings of the heart's own impulses. It is this noble impulse which St. Paul calls, in another place, the "Liberty of the glory of the sons of God" (*Rom.* viii. 21)—that Liberty which grace gives and which glory completes—the freedom of the spiritual part of man's nature from the fetters of earthly surroundings and earthly passion. Do we not begin to see, here, what real Liberty means?

True Liberty can only mean one thing—the right and faculty of marching to the right end by the most direct road. My end is before me; it is God's service, and God Himself. It is true, I have the capability of neglecting this end—of turning my back upon it. I

am quite free to do so, in the sense that I have free-will. But I have no innate and natural right to act thus. For rights are founded on reason; rights do not spring from appetites. Therefore I degrade the great word Liberty when I apply it to such a capability as this. No! Leave my path free to reach my God! That is my idea of Liberty. Let me see clearly how to reach Him; strike off the fetters that hold me from going to Him; lift me up above the morasses and the quicksands of sinful indulgence, in which I am like to sink! This is the Liberty my Christian spirit asks for. If you put chains on my lower self—if you set up barriers against my pride and my self-indulgence—if you keep me back from the world and the concupiscence thereof—I will not refuse. I do not call these things a loss of Liberty. When they happen to me, I hail my deliverance.

It is quite certain, then, that mere licence is not Liberty, and that there are many kinds of restraint which are not destructive of Liberty. It is certain, to a reasonable man, that Law, and Order, and the Divine Will, and Revelation, and Government—names which seem suggestive of checks and barriers, of coercion even—are, on the other hand, the solid pillars of the universe, which, if you were to take away, not only would Liberty die in the crash, but nothing would be left for either the mind or the flesh to long for or to fight for.

Law is what results from the way in which things stand; things, not that human hands have made or managed, but things as they are from eternity to

eternity. There is the supreme God and Lord, and there are creatures of mind, of mass; God and the universe. There they stand; God from all eternity, the creation since God made it. There they stand; and just as in some grand mountain district of Switzerland or the Pyrenees there are lofty summits fixed and immovable, with valleys between, wide or narrow, invariable distances, marked shades of colour, rocks and trees born of the very district, and even storms and movements of the air and clouds peculiar to the region. So does Law follow existence. It is because God is, and because things exist, that Law exists. The law of worship, the law of service, the law of love—these laws are fast and binding. But no despot or master invents them, or writes them down in a code, to apply them to the human race. They are laws because God exists and man exists. The laws of brotherly love and kindness to one another are not laws that are got out of a book (although a great Book has them in its pages); they are laws that follow from the fact that you have immortal souls and I have an immortal soul, and we all have God for our last end. The law of self-restraint which keeps up in the world what moral health and purity there is, is not a law agreed upon by philosophers in parliament, or formulated by wise men to enable the human race to live without cutting one another's throats. It is a binding consequence of the way human nature finds itself made or marred, and of man's duty to God, combined. Thus the moral law is the atmosphere of the universe, the mutual play of being upon being, the stream of

inter-connection and obligation which, like some ether of the planetary spaces, vibrates through and through them with unquenchable vitality. It can neither be changed by time nor affected by the vicissitudes of human history. As it is a part of the constitution of things, so it is a part of our own mental light. Ignorance may prevent its being fully recognised, passion may obscure it, prejudice may distort it; but the human race must always have it and hold it; and it must be the continuous effort of all the best of the human race to lift up the torch on high, to make it flame out and shine even into the hidden places of the world, and to hand it on with undiminished light to every succeeding generation.

But we should have a very inadequate conception of Law, and therefore of Liberty, if we merely considered Law as a necessary result of existing things and part of our own moral constitution. Man has not only his reason, but he has eyes and ears; and Law is addressed not only to his interior intelligence but also to his hearing and his eyesight. The same Supreme Being, Who is at once the chief source and the sanction of Law, has made Himself its promulgator. No reasonable man can object to this. The exterior promulgation of Law, if Law is of any use at all, is assuredly most useful—and even most necessary. Clearness, definiteness, practical application, and the persuasion and encouragement which result from exposition and exhortation—all these considerations show how necessary it is that Law should take a visible and bodily shape—that it should have a living

voice—and that it should enter into the conduct of public and private life.

There are two grand departments of external law—religion and civil society; or, to put the idea into concrete form, the Church and the State. The action of both is to restrain false Liberty and to promote the Freedom that is real. For each is the representative of God.

To a reasonable man, it is most interesting to observe the principles on which the Church legislates. We must banish from the mind the visions of despotic popes, tyrannical bishops, and domineering priests. Such personages have existed, and may exist at this moment. They no more represent the Church than bad fathers and mothers represent the parental institution. The Church's first principle is this: That she speaks in the name of God, holding God's revelation and possessing God's spirit. Therefore, she has no hesitation in formulating and imposing dogma. There need not be, and there should not be, any outcry about dogma. Dogma is the laying down of the law about God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and redemption, and the world to come. If the Church is what she claims to be, there is in this no infringement of Liberty. God can certainly "dogmatise" about Himself. And for an authority which really knows, to tell us about these vital matters, is no more an encroachment on our liberty than for a traveller to tell us the truth about Central Africa. Free thought about religion is not true Liberty at all. It is folly, ignorance, and prejudice. The only real Freedom is to be delivered from it.

Doubtless, the human mind has a natural inclination to think as it pleases about religious matters. But what did we say just now? The blind appetite that moves in the undisciplined heart and urges the human self to please itself—this appetite is unworthy the name of Liberty. No! When a man maintains that there is no such thing as a teaching Church I can understand him, even if I think him fatally mistaken. But I cannot understand any man's objecting to an infallible Church teaching dogmatically. Such is the Catholic Church's first principle.

Her second is this: Knowing, as she does, what is good and bad, right and wrong, she is justified in doing her best to promote the one and put down the other. Ah! I think I hear some one exclaim, now we are going to have an apology for persecution. There is no need of any such apology as far as regards the Church. If ever there was "persecution" it was because the laity, the community at large, carried it out; just as, in this country, you prosecute a man who sells an indecent book, and in France, perhaps, they do not. But as to the principle of coercion or prevention in moral matters—apart from cruelty or childish interference—no reasonable man can hesitate. If you own it as a duty to stamp out infection, to put down disease, to forbid dangerous occupations, and if in these things there is not, in principle at least, any treason against true Liberty, then it follows that it is right, in principle, to prevent the dissemination of moral poison, and to take active measures against the false teacher and the corrupter. In practice it may

be often inexpedient to attempt it; but in principle it must be right. And if this be true, how much more evident it is that the ordinary disciplinary laws of the Church are wholly and thoroughly consistent with true Liberty! For these laws, grounded as they are on revelation, sanctioned by saints and sages, tried by historic experience, may truly be said to be the dictation of the Holy Spirit; a code pronounced in some of its parts by God Himself, and intended to hold men firmly in that path which alone leads to life—that path which alone is Liberty.

The State has for its general legislation the same Divine sanction as the Church, although that legislation is less nearly connected with things Divine. That is, the State can make laws—and those laws bind the conscience—and they are in no way hostile to the glorious name of Liberty. By the State is meant any organised community—kingdom, empire, or republic. Happy the people who willingly and intelligently obey the law! for all true liberties spring and flourish in such a land, and it is in peace. Even when civil laws are inexpedient and should be altered, the principle of Liberty is not rebellion or conspiracy, for these things kill liberty whilst they praise her; but patient striving, lawful action, and brave suffering; yes, suffering—for suffering is the most fertilising of all the showers that man, with all his means, can bring down upon the surface of this world.

For suffering is the key and pledge of Liberty. No man can long be free who cannot suffer. For the nature that dreads to suffer is ready to thrust its

hands into any fetters in order to escape it. The despot or the tyrant has only to send his satellites, and the craven heart puts on the chains. The world has only to frown, and the pale worldling falls upon his knees. Poverty has merely to show her threatening face, and the cowardly wretch flings faith and loyalty to the winds. The arrows of scorn have only to begin to prick the skin of selfish sensitiveness, and the smarting creature turns round and flees for life.

But the man who can suffer has the key of prisons and the vantage-ground of every earthly power. When the most powerful of all empires tried to destroy the religion of Christ, the Christians stood out for Liberty. That was a true and a grand Liberty ! Never was the name more justly bestowed than on that struggle, and on those like to it that have gone on in the world ever since. How nobly free was the confessor in his deep and noisome dungeon ; the champion of Christ dragged to the rack and the fire ; the martyr before the heathen judge ; the tender maid and the young child in the very clutches of the wild beasts. They were free because they could resist and suffer. This is the consistent Christian teaching through all the ages. The blind appetite of Liberty is irrational and dangerous. Liberty must be found in the rational guidance of one's nature to its end. But, after all, nothing feeds Liberty so well as either the constant habit of self-restraint or the necessity of resisting violence from without. When the persecution ceases, the Christian, to preserve his Liberty, seeks the desert or the monastic cell.

He sets up barriers against money and voluptuousness. He carries the yoke of obedience. Or at least he studies and practises these lessons of mortification which hold in check the lower nature in order to set free the higher. It is a struggle—and a struggle that will not end except with life. But Liberty itself is always in danger as long as life endures. Still, Liberty—Christian Liberty—can by these means be made more and more secure; and perchance it may happen that the saint, who has for many long years taught himself and exercised himself in renunciation, in detachment and in endurance, may find, as the last hour draws nigh, that the fetters of passion are falling off and the weight of earthly heaviness dissolving as a mist; and that, even before the light breaks through the everlasting gates, he is tasting, through Christ's blessed passion, the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

XIX.

THE CONVENT CHURCH.

(Preached at St. Mary's Priory, Princethorpe, on the Jubilee of the Church, October, 1893.)

“ And Jacob took of the stones that lay there, and putting under his head, slept in the same place. And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching Heaven; the Angels also of God ascending and descending by it.”—*Genesis* xxviii. 11, 12.

THIS vision, the most wonderful of all those Divine communications by which the hoped-for Messiah and His kingdom were foretold to the patriarchs of the chosen people, not only confirms the promise of that Saviour, but shadows forth the very features of the Christian Church herself. Therefore, when the servant of God arose from his inspired dream, he cried out, in awe and prophecy, “ This place is terrible ! It is the house of God and the gate of Heaven ! ” For there was, first, the rock or stone, on which the head lay which received that Divine illumination—a stone on which he poured out the oil of unction, symbolic of the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ; then there were the other stones which he piled up there, making it a holy place for future generations ; further, there was the voice of the Lord—that mighty word

which never ceases in the Church of the living God; and, lastly, there were those heavenly communications—that lifting up of man's spirit and that constant downflow of the graces of Jesus Christ, which make the Church the ladder that reaches from the earth to the heavens, and that establishes and keeps up the perpetual communication of God with man, and man with God. This spot, where Jacob slept and dreamt, was truly a holy place and a terrible place. In his weary journey from Bersabee to Mesopotamia, with the prophetic patriarchal blessing upon him, in order to seek, at the bidding of his father, the bride from whom was to descend the Saviour of the world, he was overtaken by darkness amid the sombre hills and stony ravines that lie between the sea and the valley of the Jordan. It was by that way that his grandfather, Abraham, had passed (when he separated from Lot) to the country that was afterwards called Judæa; there Abraham had dwelt, and had probably himself raised a "holy place" to the Lord. These "holy places" were to the wandering people at once the symbol and the pledge of the presence in their midst of the God of Heaven and earth. These they revered; to these they gathered on days and festivals; these heaps of rough stones upon the mountain-top brought their God near to them and kept alive, from generation to generation, faith, religion, and trust in the future and the unseen. When more settled times came they were replaced by the Temple of Sion. And, finally, there came that which both they and the Temple prefigured and foretold—the Church of the

living God. The people of God are no longer a small and unknown tribe, migrating from north to south, and from south to north, between the sea and the great plains, making their sanctuaries in the open air on the dark hills; neither are they a single nation, occupying the length and breadth of a fertile land which God had given them, with one holy city and one great Temple. The people of God are now the whole world; and wherever there are souls of men, there also is by right the one and all-embracing Church; and wherever the one Church is, holy places can be multiplied, sanctuaries set up, and altars raised; and in every place where the Universal Church thus takes unto herself an outward shape and a material habitation, there is the dream of the patriarch realised, and heaven is brought into communication with the earth, and the earth with the heavens.

This church of yours has all the endowments, the prerogatives, and the glory of the Church Universal. It has the Church's stability and security; the Church's spiritual unction and fulness of grace; it has the same Presence and Word which is the Church's life; and, like the Church, it lifts up hearts to God and draws down God to the heart. Any one who passes its threshold, if he is instructed, knows this. Any stranger, even from another hemisphere, even from remotest and least known shores, if he is a Catholic, knows what to find within these walls. This altar is the altar he has always known, and these rites are familiar to him; and even if the tongue, or the vesture, or the observances be strange, he knows that

God is in this place—God's word, God's presence, God's operation, God's mercy. He knows that in this place there is the universal Catholic truth, the universal Catholic teaching, the universal Catholic sacrifice, the universal Catholic Sacraments. And he knows that all that the Church was meant to bring to the universal world, this church can bring to him in particular, and to those who gather beneath its roof.

And yet you are not wrong in calling it your church. It is yours; and by a title far more real, because so far more spiritual, than any claims of material ownership can confer. It is yours because it is bound up with the history of your spirit. For the spirit, as we all know, has a thousand points of contact with this universe of matter. For this very reason it is that there is a visible Church, a Priesthood, Sacraments, and the great dispensation of the holy Eucharist. And, therefore, it is not surprising—it is most natural—I will go further, and say it is right and just—that the walls and the roof of your own church should be dear to you, and that you should love the choir and the altar which have been, through so many years, the symbol and the visible means of the nearness and the merciful work of the Lord your God. On this spot, for fifty years, hath stood for you the heavenly ladder of the patriarchal vision; here the Angels have brought holy things down, and carried up the love and the tears of those to whom they are given as ministers; here the Lord God has leaned “upon the top,” as the Holy Scripture phrases it, and filled the sanctuary with the fragrance of Heaven.

And if we consider more closely what it is that Heaven sends down to the earth on this spot, where stands a church of the Church Catholic, we cannot but feel the difference between the Bethel of the patriarch and this hallowed building. The Angels whom Jacob saw passed swiftly backwards and forwards. No sooner had their brightness touched the unresponsive earth than they quickly returned to the skies again. But here—here, would they not linger if they might? Nay, do they not linger—in hundreds, in thousands, at Mass and around the Tabernacle, or even about the altar on which the adorable Sacrifice has taken place? For you know that what is here is more than all the Hierarchies could bring down. The Angels are “mighty in strength” and they “execute His word”. But this is the Word itself; and it is nothing less than His own strong and irresistible love which has given this house of God its consecration. He is here; and He is here perpetually and continuously. Even if, on occasion, this particular church might be deprived of the Real Eucharistic Presence, yet that Presence is always in the Church of the universal world, and this church is part of the Universal Church. At the dedication of the Temple of Sion, the glory of the Lord visibly filled the Holy of Holies, in answer to the prayer of Solomon. The Christian altar has no visible halo; it stands silent and too often deserted, with only its linen cloths and its symbolic ornaments; but to faith and love it speaks of an abiding Presence more wonderful far than the radiance which startled the Jewish multitudes on that great day of festival. The Pres-

ence is with us. It does not come and go. The Angels find it here, as we do. This thought represents what you have to be thankful for when you thank God for fifty years of the possession and enjoyment of a church. All that has come down to you here is related to the Blessed Sacrament.

First, there is the Mass itself. For fifty years the Mass on this spot has never failed for a single day. Sundays, festivals of all degrees, ferial days, as week after week has passed—each recurring morning has found the priest here, and the servants of God gathered round. There have been grand and glorious Masses, on the great days of the Christian year, or when the presence of the Pontiff has brought into the sanctuary the touching pomp of the Christian high priesthood. There have been the sweetly-chanted Masses of the Sunday Office, when one is reminded of those words of St. John: “And I was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day”. There have been the innumerable quiet Masses of the ordinary mornings, said in the dawn of light, or with the first beams of the risen sun, or whilst the darkness of the long winter’s night seemed still to linger without. And there have been the Masses of the Dead, regularly recurring in their times and seasons, bringing mournfully yet soothingly to the memory the sisters who have passed away, and all the suffering souls; and sometimes that most touching of all Masses, when some one lies dead even under the very roof, and there come from the altar, with a meaning most acute and penetrating, those words of Him Who raised up Lazarus: “I am the

Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live." What a feature in the life of a community is the daily Mass! Bringing the Cross and the Precious Blood into their very midst—expiating sin, dissipating tepidity, fortifying self-sacrifice, intensifying love—it unites each heart to its God and Master, and keeps it close to the fountains of its Saviour. There is no moment of worship like the Mass—no moment of successful prayer—no moment of transformation into the likeness of Jesus. Daily this grace has been given to you. Daily, with the rising of the sun, Jesus has appeared on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Daily you have drawn near to Him. Daily have you placed your hand in the wound of His side. Truly is this the Lord's own house, and you are of His household; and you, and those who have gone before you, have partaken of His mercies all the days of your life.

Then there are the Sacraments. There is the weekly Confession. No Angel, with all his powers of healing and of consolation, could have brought to the wearied patriarch what the minister of the Church brings, by Christ's institution, to your souls in the tribunal of penance. You there come in contact with a reality which renews the spiritual life within you; a reality which sends you to your daily routine again as Jesus sent the paralytic whom He bade to take up his bed and walk. You there see things great and small in a light such as fell upon those who found themselves at Jesus' feet in His earthly life. You are there reconciled to the Sacred Heart, which you have

wounded so many times. You are there comforted with a comfort which nothing in this world can give.

From the confessional you go to the Holy Table of the Lord. Much more frequently, indeed, than you confess, do you venture, in all humility, to receive your Saviour. This church, from its dedication, has witnessed, every day perhaps, the silent uprising, the devout approach of the procession of the veiled spouses of Christ, to partake of the greatest gift of all His great gifts. Through all these years, as the Church sings, you and your community have been watched over by the guardianship of the Providence of God and preserved in safety to participate in these holy mysteries; mysteries that mean life and true happiness; mysteries that mean your Saviour's love; mysteries which it is our greatest privilege to live for. All these years the Tabernacle has stood here, the lamp has burned, and the ciborium has held the precious manna of the new covenant. All these years He has been with you as a guest, as a friend, as the very master or father of your own Community. In Communion He has wrought day by day upon your heart. For the effect of the Blessed Sacrament is to turn will, desire, and impulse into our Lord's own august and most holy longings; it is to deprive us of our own hearts and to put His in their stead. How steadily, how lovingly, how unceasingly, has this work of grace gone on for this Community! Other souls have been left for years at a distance from the Sacrament of His love; time, place, occupation, and temperament have combined to make it difficult for

them to frequent Holy Communion. Not so with you. Tranquillity, leisure, proximity, observance, obedience have joined together to enable you to make use to the utmost of the bread of Heaven. You have never been without Him. His presence each day has been felt throughout the whole house. Always has there been the quiet church, beckoning to you sweetly whenever there was a moment to spare. Always has the work or the reading been gone through with a consciousness that He was not far off. Always has the gentle recreation been made more calm and kind by His unseen influence. Always have the sick, imprisoned by the cross in their cell, or lying in wakefulness and pain through the slow night, known well that they were not alone, but that every aspiration was heard by the most constant of friends. "The Lord is faithful," says St. Paul. In looking back over fifty years you feel that this is true. With Him there is no fickleness or change. He is yours and He remains yours. He never departs and He never fails. Where you leave Him there you find Him again—His presence as real, His hands as full of gifts, His patience undiminished, and the love of His sacred Heart always the same. In the thought of such faithfulness and loyalty as this, what can we say about our own hearts? And how can we sufficiently repent of the changeableness, the coldness, and negligence which have marked our lives during these years—years of grace?

These are the chief graces which your church has been the means of bringing to your souls. But there are many others. There is the Divine and perpetual

word of God. For although you may not always, like the greater part of the faithful, hear that word from the altar, yet, wherever or howsoever you hear it, it comes from the altar. For it is the presence of the Incarnate Word in the Eucharistic mystery which is the chief and the perpetual sermon of Christianity; and if you hear of God, of faith, or of mysteries, the best mirror of God and the best explanation of Divine things are the Incarnation and the Blessed Sacrament; if you hear of virtues and vices, the only means of acquiring the one and avoiding the other is to become transformed by the contemplation of the Incarnate God. No one has the office of preaching except the priest. No one can edify the mystical Body of Christ except those who handle His real Body. Other channels only convey to the soul that which has its source in the altar; and so you feel, whether in the chapter-house or at your spiritual reading.

There is also the Divine Office. The psalmody which during these years has risen from this holy choir is not the chant of a small body of unknown women; it is a part of that hymn of praise which the Universal Church perpetually sings to the Majesty of God. You have this privilege because you chant in a church of the Church Catholic. The constant prayer of the Spouse of Christ, joined as it is to the constant prayer of Christ Himself, is the world's redemption and salvation. From the beginning it has gone on, and it will go on to the end. The world without lives its life—turbulent, distracted, and full of wickedness. The prayer of the Church knows no interruption from

century to century. And it has been thus with you. For fifty years the world round about you has been busy with its work, its politics, its pleasures ; but, by God's grace, every day, nay, seven times in the day, and in the night, your prayer has never ceased. The mysteries of each holy season have come in their order ; the blessed figures of the Saints have appeared, one after another ; the same sweet psalms, in which so many generations of Benedictines have found their spiritual food, have been daily on your lips ; the same lessons and blessings and prayers have been part of your continual oblation, as they were of those who have gone before you.

And, finally, there is the presence and assistance of Blessed Mary and the Saints. A church of the Catholic Church could no more be without Mary than Bethlehem could be without her, or Nazareth, or Calvary. To you, during all these years, the Blessed Mother of God has brought these helps and blessings which she is appointed to bring to the whole world. That is, she has made the Incarnation more real, more tender, more attractive ; she has taught you what the Blood of Jesus can do for a human soul ; and she has unlocked the springs of your heart in prayer, in sorrow, and in petition. As she is a part of the dispensation of the Incarnation, so she is a part of those holy influences which hallow a church. This church, standing in peaceful beauty here for these years past, has been her home, as it has been the home of God and of the Blessed Sacrament. Never a day, hardly an hour, in which she has not heard her name invoked—in the

Mass, in the Office, in the Rosary, in the *Salve*. The mother of all for whom her Son died, she is especially the mother of those who gather around His unbloody Sacrifice; more especially still the mother of religious women; and most of all the mother of a Community on whom her most sweet name is invoked as their patron and titular. And with her have come all the Saints and citizens of Heaven; with her are present the Angelic hosts, her special servants and ministers—united with her in your invocations and your continual devotion. With her is Blessed Joseph, the powerful protector of the Catholic Church, and of this church; and, in a word, the Apostles, the martyrs, the virgins, all your holy patrons and blessed guardians. They are here because this is a church. They are the spiritual walls, roof, foundation, of your church; and in thanking God for your church you thank Him also for them. All these things are the blessings which descend from the heavens upon a Catholic church. This is why it is a place so “terrible”; the house of God and the gate of Heaven.

But now let us consider what it is that has gone up to the heavens from this spot during all these years. The heavenly messengers came down and went up. Have not precious things, and holy things, and Divine things, ascended daily during all these fifty years? I do not speak of the Sacrifice of the Altar. The odour of that most mighty holocaust has indeed gone up to God, and it is this very earth of ours which has sent it up; for He Who is at once the offerer and the victim is man like unto us. But He is also God, and

we seek now to understand what "ascensions" have found their way to the throne of God from those hearts that are still in this vale of tears. It is prayer—prayer in all its species and variety—that has answered the coming down of the gifts of God. God's house is the "house of prayer". It is in order that prayer may burn intensely, and, like incense, may rise continually, that these foundations stand, that these walls have been raised, and this roof made overhead. It is for the sake of prayer that you have this altar, and this Presence, and sacraments, and holy powers of every kind. For what God wants is the heart; and the heart can only be His by the operation and energy of its own intelligence and will; and such operation is that lifting up which men call prayer. It is by prayer we become near to God, and subject to God, and like to God; and this is the purpose of our lives. Just as a garden of flowers, when the sun begins to shine, sends up its perfume, so this Community during these years have lifted up their mind, will, imagination, and feeling under the influence of the Presence that is here; daily and many times a day; in the day and the night; at morning and evening; in joy and in sorrow; in sunshine and in gloom; in psalm and hymn; in antiphon and in collect; and in the silent spaces of meditation and contemplation. Can your hearts be too grateful to God, Who for so many years has "filled you with the good things of His house" (*Ps. lxxiv. 5*)? Must we not all cry out with heartfelt conviction, "Blessed" (that is, happy) "are they that dwell in Thy house, O God; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever!"

But, in a monastic house, there are kinds of prayer, some habitual, some transitory in their exercise, which, as they especially characterise the soul of a religious, so they find their abundant nourishment in the church of the Monastery. First of all, there came to each of us what our Holy Father, using the language of Scripture, calls "conversion". Conversion may come not only once, but many times; and each time it may be more complete, more penetrating, deeper down in the roots of our spirit. In some sense, every religious has experienced it. We can recall, perhaps, how in our youth and our youthful fervour we knelt before this altar and turned with our whole heart to God. It seemed to us that nothing could be so sweet as to serve Him and Him alone. All the holy influences of the church acted upon our spirit. It seemed that Jesus called us from the Tabernacle, that Mary encouraged us, that the Divine Office lifted up our heart, that the very unction of the sacred precinct filled us with the Holy Spirit. And these things were true. It was real, so far as it went. It was bliss, it was happiness. We can never look back to that time without gratitude and emotion; and even were this church the commonest spot upon the earth, it would always be hallowed to those to whom God then first spoke so movingly and so powerfully. And possibly we have had since then other conversions. It has been in a retreat, perhaps; or through the lives of the Saints; or when the great preacher, Death, has appeared in the house. Perhaps it was a much more painful and crucifying conversion than the first—entailing the

breaking up of a dangerous habit, the sacrifice of something that stood between us and God—the resolute purgation of affection, feeling, or intellect. We remember how this church helped us then. In its very silence there went on whispering, whispering, that still, small voice, which was, beyond all doubt, the voice of God. The cry and abandonment of the Psalms were just the utterance that put into shape that precious feeling that God alone was worth living for. The Mass was like the kindling of a huge fire, as when a city or a forest burns, and we found, in the words of the Psalm, that we could not escape its mighty heat. Coming to Holy Communion from a confession in which we had, perhaps, taken some decided step, and given some pledge to God and to man, it seemed as if we never could refuse anything any more to a Heart which had been so generous to His servants. At such times—and there are many such in the life of a religious—a life's memorial stones are set up. And you cannot enter this choir, or turn to this altar, or think of your church, without associating this place with the mercies of your God to your unworthiness, and thanking Him for the visible and sensible assistance therein vouchsafed to you.

But if the fervour and the strivings of your conversion have ascended from this sanctuary to God's throne, so also has the fortitude and the patience of your stability. To remain in holy bonds, to love the sacred fetters of your vows, to cling to obedience and to this never-ceasing religious observance—what great graces are these! It is here you have received them

and corresponded with them. It was the sight of this church, perhaps, known in your youth, with its air of devotion, its holy services, its perpetual chant of the Divine Office, which first made you resolve that you would live in the house of the Lord all your life. When you pronounced your vows, then you sensibly felt the fruit of those prayers of consecration which promise (in the words of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple) that God should see and should hear in this holy place (2 *Par.* vi.). When the noon-day devil or the tempter of the darkness has tried to shake your vocation, you have fled here for refuge and strength. When the echoes of the world without have raised regrets in your heart, the hour of prayer under this roof has restored you to peace and good resolution. When mental depression, physical infirmity, or wounded self-love has filled your spirit with dangerous thoughts, the Blessed Sacrament has calmed the trouble, and the loving reproach of Jesus has brought you once more to His feet. You have loved the beauty of God's house—the morning Mass, the Benedictions, the festivals; the altar and its adornment; the sound of the Office. All the features, and even the peculiarities, of your church, having grown familiar to you as the years have gone by, have wound themselves around your hearts; and had you now to leave it or to lose it, you would suffer as we suffer when we lose a friend. *Haec requies mea! Hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam!* When you think of this holy and dear home in which you have taken up your lot—a home which you do not want to exchange

for any other except the heavenly Jerusalem—it is the church that is principally in your mind and heart. Your vows, the company of your Sisters, all this serene observance—where are all these things seen at their best, at their highest, at their loveliest, but in the church? And when you thank our Lord for the past fifty years, do not forget to thank Him for binding you to your vows and to Himself—you and those who have gone before you—by the blessing He has given to this church which He has preserved.

Thus have the incense of prayer, of conversion, and of stability gone up to Heaven during these fifty years. I am sure that I might go further, and say that the influence of this church has been to keep up the perpetual thought of God, and that constant and hourly sacrifice of self which leads to the true love of God with the whole heart. These distracted minds of ours—how have they been helped to think of heavenly things by the presence, in the house, of the Tabernacle! These frivolous hearts—how have they been awed into serious resolves by the patient presence of Jesus! In our evening prayer, how has He reproached us for our many faults, our want of generosity, our murmurings, our neglect! In the morning, how sweetly has He inspired the desire and the resolution to be humble, to be obedient, to be regular, to conquer such a fault, or to strive after something that will make us more like Himself! How has He drawn closer—here, in the choir, and in Holy Communion—the bonds of that sisterly love upon which depends the healthy existence and the very life of a Community! In the cloister,

the workroom, the refectory, the recreation-room, clouds may arise; there may be coldness, unkindness, even bitterness in thought, word, and act. But in the church the clouds seem to melt away, and there comes a sunshine from Heaven which shows to our foolish hearts what these Sisters really are to Jesus and to us. The light of the altar shines on a family of Jesus Christ, all of them souls which He has created for Heaven and redeemed by His Precious Blood; whom it is His ardent desire, and His only desire, to draw closer to Himself. In that light, how small, how contemptible, how deplorable, must be every thought and act which is prompted by vanity, or selfishness, or the smart of wounded feeling! And thus the church drives us to God alone, to think of Him, to love Him, to make sacrifices for Him, and to direct all the details of our life to His service and His glory. As the church is among the monastic buildings, so, by its means, is God in our lives. The chief space belongs to it; a plain way leads to it; loving care adorns it; every hour finds it frequented; in every absence the heart turns there.

With fervent hearts, then, may you sing your *Te Deum* this day, on which you celebrate this Jubilee. "Thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year," said our Lord in the ancient law (*Lev. xxv. 10*). "Every man shall return to his possession, and every one shall go back to his family." Your family is not all here. By far the greater part have been called away from the spot where they received so many blessings. But do not think that they forget, or that they do not join with

you in the thanksgiving on this day. They are, we may trust, now in possession of a land whence they would not return, even in the Jubilee of the remission of the fiftieth year. But they can be in the heavens and here too. With what fervour must they sing their thanks before the throne for all the goodness of their Saviour lavished upon them here, and for that further mercy which made them use the mercies of their Lord unto their own perfection and salvation ! Your Sisters in Heaven will pray for you. And if there are any who are yet in purgatory, we, on our part, will not forget them, in order that the joy of the remission and of the gathering of families all together may be theirs in that true sense in which they long for it. As for us, our life and our task are not yet over. Fifty years of our church are past ; but we are still here—to begin another fifty years, and to go on with our service of God under this roof as long as it may please Him to leave us. Therefore, whilst we are grateful for the past, we must look with fervent resolution to the future. May the Presence here, and the Unction, and all good influences, be to us, in all our lives, what God would have them to be, that this holy place may be truly to us the gate of Heaven !

XX.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD.

(Preached at the Unveiling of the Angel-Altar in the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Abergavenny, on Rosary Sunday, October 7, 1883.)

“Bless the Lord, all ye His Angels, you ministers of His, that do His Will.”—*Ps. cii. 21.*

ALMIGHTY GOD is infinitely beyond the reach of the knowledge of man. Still, He has enabled man to know Him in a degree—in a degree which, though insignificant as compared with what God is, may be very splendid and impressive in its effects on man himself. God has allowed man to see His works; and God's works are an unexhausted source of light and admiration. The study of a flower may fill the mind with instruction and the heart with love. The world all about us, the varied earth with its colours and shades, the hills, the things that spring up on the earth, the rivers, the ocean, have always struck upon the divinely-fashioned heart of man, and made it responsive with praise. Men have gazed up at night into the dark blue sky, when the mysterious stars are set in their watches, and have grown giddy and intoxicated with the sense of vast distance and limitless space. For “the heavens declare the glory of

God, and the firmament showeth forth the work of His hands" (*Ps. viii.*). . . . But there is a universe beyond the containing firmament, and there are works of God grander than the orbs of heaven.

The Angels were the first of God's creations; and their home is heaven, and heaven is where God is seen face to face. In speaking of the Angels, therefore, we have to speak of heaven, and of the pure spirits who dwell there—and all our words are in some way mixed up with matter—with body, shape, colour, and sense. Still, by using figures and analogies, we can attain the truth; not the whole truth, but still truth. When we have said all we find to say, heaven will be yet more than our words, and the holy Angels, and Almighty God, will still be high above the reach of our poor thoughts.

Heaven is where God is seen. He who is everywhere, is there in a special and ineffable way. Shall we call it a land, a country—a court—a palace? It is all these. The land of glory—the country of the blessed spirits—the court of the eternal—the palace of the Omnipotent King. True, as it is said in the first book of Kings, the "heaven of heavens cannot contain Him"; yet He is there; "heaven is My throne," He says in the book of *Isaias* (*lxvii. 1*). And in the unearthly language we must talk on such a subject, it is no contradiction to call the heavens both His court and His throne. There He sits, in the calm repose of eternity and infinity—the Ancient of Days, upon that great white throne (*Dan. vii. 9*), His garments white as snow, His hair as white wool; or—to translate the

prophetic figure—wrapped in the awful holiness and purity of the Godhead. That white robe flashes with precious jewels—“with the jasper and the sardine-stone and all precious stones”—and round about the throne there plays a rainbow as a sun-lighted emerald; and these are figures of His sovereign attributes and perfections. And the throne is a flaming fire; its wheels are fire; and a swift stream of fire issues out before Him; and He is girt about the breast with a zone, as it were, of burnished brass. This mystic fire is the symbol of that sovereign life and living power, whereby He radiates essence and existence and operation to everything that is. And the heaven of God is more vast, it is higher and broader, than any thought of man can reach. Its height baffles the eye with unfathomable golden light. Its inconceivable shining depths mock the pursuit of even the purged eyes of the Blessed. The crystal of the “sea of glass” that is its floor shines and sparkles for ever and ever in the radiance of that throne which is hung in the heights above it, as no silver sea of the earth ever shone beneath the beams of the morning. For heaven—all of heaven that is not God—is made up of living things. The angels, and those who fill angelic places, are the living court and palace and habitation of the King of Ages. And stretching downwards on all sides from the “inaccessible light” of the eternal throne—living, reigning, rejoicing—unconstrained, yet uncon-fused—darting and pressing towards the blissful vision, yet inebriated and satiate with full fruition—far down, far out, innumerable—are the tens of thousands and

the tens of hundreds of thousands of the angels of God. With bowed head, with bended knee, they keep their orders in that presence. Everlastingly they swing their golden censers, and the immortal incense rises to the King. For ever and evermore the music of their harps and voices swells around the throne, and every spirit joins for ever in the stupendous liturgy that never has an end. Thus they adore the Lamb, and, looking face to face upon their Last End, they continually cry, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty, that was, that is, and that is to come! Thou art worthy, O Lord, our God, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were" (*Apoc.* iv. 11). . . . O heaven—bright and glorious heaven!—home of the angels! home of us poor sinners!—for thee let us live!—to purchase thee let all our lives be spent!

Each of us may have some idea of an angel. It is probably a figure of youth and beauty, clad in a simple flowing robe, with strong fair wings folded gently, with serene face and eyes of gentle love, and, perhaps, a majestic arm upraised for man's protection. The figure is not false. Yet, if we could see them up there in heaven where they are, it would seem a truer figure to say that an angel was a flash of the lightning of heaven. Bright light, fierce heat, tremendous power—this is what an angel is. The saint who is the great writer on the hierarchy of heaven, St. Denis, tells us that fire is the chief scriptural symbol of an angel. The activity of fire, its penetrating subtlety, its uncontrollable freedom, its irresistible power, the brilliancy

of its moment of action—these are the qualities that make the Holy Scripture describe the angels as fire—as wheels of fire, as rivers of fire, as burning flames, as creatures full of fiery brightness. An angel is a soul without the prison of a body. He is so swift that space is annihilated before him. He is so strong that he rives the earth asunder, compels the clouds, holds the helm of the whirling tempest, lifts the ocean waters, guides the orbs of heaven, quells the demons, nay, almost penetrates the thoughts of the heart of man. His life is so living, so real, so true, that, once again, there is nothing to express the swiftness and the heat of his intellect and his will but the electric fire that darts from cloud to cloud, most terrible of the forces of the world. And what is man, and what is his strength—what is the power whose displays we admire so much on earth—to the pure spirits whose unfettered strength is so beautiful, and whose beauty is so strong! And the countless multitude that stretches downwards from the supreme throne is made up of princes and powers such as these. Singly, they are more mighty than all the world; combined in the thronging brightness of their heavenly companies, they offer such a worship to their King and ours as should make glad the hearts of those whose hearts are His.

Let us still dare to interrogate the secrets of heaven. We see, what indeed we might have expected, that the glory of the angelic host does not consist in the mere multitude of mighty intelligences. We see that the Supreme Wisdom has deigned to glorify Himself, not by creating one kind of being and then multiplying it,

but by constituting a kingdom, a universe which, for marvellous variety, far surpasses all that our earth or sea or sky can boast of. There is an order in heaven, an unspeakable rise of rank above rank—of light above light—of fire above fire. There are distinctions of orders in that celestial chivalry. Each peer and prince of God's own empire has a throne, a diadem, a robe, a sceptre, answering to his grade and his degree. The first distinction is that of Hierarchies, the second of Choirs, the third of one angel from another.

The whole host of the angels is divided into three great hierarchies. It is difficult to gain a notion of what it is that constitutes the difference of one hierarchy from another. Holy writers, however, tell us that the difference consists in their ways of knowing. Let us bear in mind that in a pure spirit knowledge and power are one and the same. Let us also recollect that perhaps our most crushing conception of the almighty power of God is the thought that He knows and sees in one simple view all things that are, that have been, and that are to come—because He sees and comprehends Himself. Human knowledge, on the other hand, for the most part sees only one thing at a time, and is painfully acquired by a continual process of making acquaintance with single facts. The angels so far partake of God's way of knowing things that they know, not by single instances, but by general laws; not piecemeal, but by wide views; not by the slow process of putting fact to fact, but by the lightning quickness of intuition. The angel has in his intellect the mirror of the universe—all the laws that

God has made, and each law seen in its relations, in all its particular facts and singular instances—all truths, not lying in fragments and in broken pieces, but in one clear and connected whole. It is as though a man stood upon a mountain height and gazed upon a wide and glorious view. Beneath him are the lower heights that fall gradually away until the sea washes the base of the lowest range. In the hollows the tarns and lakes multiply their shining light. In the large and spreading valley is the clustering city with its smoke and its spires, the winding river, the rich landscape with its brown soil and green pasturage, its thickly-scattered trees, and its white roads leading to quiet villages. From point to point in the wide panorama, the men who dwell in the land are seen moving to and fro, their view shut in, their pace slow, themselves insignificant. Such is man's knowledge compared with the angels', and such, and so wide and grand, is the knowledge that is possessed by the lowest angelic hierarchy. In the words of the Prophet (*Ezekiel* xxviii.) they are "the seal (or pattern) of God's likeness, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty . . . on the day wherein they were made".

More near the heavenly throne, more familiar with the "inaccessible light," reign the intelligences whose legions compose the second hierarchy. As they are nearer the great central fire, so their knowledge is vaster, wider, and more general. It is not merely that they know more, but they know it in a more universal way. They know things and the law of things, because they know the reasons of all law; they know

all truth by knowing the very sources of truth. They do not merely see at a glance every law of the thousands that exist in this universe, but they see the laws of these laws—they see the occult Why of all this How, and the universe is to them a book which they can read in the few and simple written words that they carry imprinted on their mighty intellects. To carry on an illustration just used: it is as though one of these spirits stood, not upon a lofty mountain, but above the world upon some star, and, with far-seeing vision, contemplated this earth of ours. He would see the limits of the continents and the oceans, the mountain ranges and the plains. He would hold the secret of the sources of great rivers, he would follow their course and mark their union with the sea. The sun's light, as the earth whirled round, would be to him as a golden tide, ceaselessly advancing and breaking, along the vast line of the earth's curve. The cradle of the storm, its furious course and its extinction, would be visible to his sight. And all the while far beneath him would soar the mountain-heights whereon spirits stood less gifted than himself, themselves majestic. Was there not a reason for the old Hebrew proverb which enhances the wisdom of a wise man by comparing it to that of an angel! (2 *Kings* xiv. 20). And is it not rapture to think that these spirits of knowledge are our brothers and fellow-citizens—even ours, poor as we are in everything save in the merits of Jesus Christ!

And now we approach to the very flames of the eternal throne. The highest hierarchy of heaven,

multitudinous, worshipping with mighty acts of love that never cease, has the secret of its knowledge and of its power almost hidden within the "inaccessible light" itself. The third hierarchy knows, by knowing the How—the second by knowing the Why; but the first by knowing the very fountain of all Laws, and of all Reasons—the being of God Himself. High up on a mountain height that has no rivals near it, they meet the first shock of the unbearable brightness of the Godhead. To them He immediately reveals Himself; them He fills, in them He rests; and so the lowest of their choirs is the choir of the Thrones, a name that is common to the whole hierarchy. He whose Word is the eternal pattern and model of everything that is possible, He is to them their knowledge. How He is so it is impossible to explain. He has marvellous ways of joining Himself to a creature. He pervades its being, supporting it lest it return to nothing. To a being that has intellect He is joined still more marvellously. He enlightens it and makes it understand. To man He has imparted a created similitude of His own uncreated intellect. To some of the angels He has imparted, as we have seen, not light merely, but completed vision, by impressing large, grand, and simple pictures of things upon the minds—the largeness growing, the grandeur rising, the simplicity deepening as the angel rises nearer Himself. But to this supreme hierarchy His own immediate presence is their knowledge—not that He Himself is part of them, which is impossible, but that He is so close to them that the effect of His closeness is, to a

creature in its natural state, hardly distinguishable from Himself. And it is the nature of the first hierarchy of spirits to behold, in that large, grand, and simple impression, everything that is. You will say, this is making them like to God. It was the very thought before which a third part of heaven fell to rise no more. But it was false. God is very different still. And it was Michael who saw this, and who rallied the faithful legions by his battle-cry of "Who is like to God?" Yet their nature is indeed very high. Comparisons fail us here. We can only think of the all-seeing eye of God—the eye to which space is but a point, and multitude simple unity—the eye of Him to Whom the worlds are a little dust, Who holds the earth on three fingers, and the seas in the hollow of His hand—Who reaches from end to end, sweetly disposing and strongly ordaining all things—we can only think of His omniscient act, and then say, these angels know it. Not that they do know it adequately—not that they comprehend the incomprehensible; but that which He wishes them to see, in that sovereign mirror they see it.

Is it worth while to dwell upon such thoughts as these? To me it seems that it is. For the works of God are His words to us, and His praise is written on the face of every living thing. To know something of the nature of the blessed angels, who form so large a part of God's creation, makes us think more of God, and makes us think more of heaven. For if such and so high be the angels in their simple nature, what are they now. when to all this has been added the beatific

vision of God face to face, even as He is? Their orders remain—their natures relatively to each other are not changed; still they sing in their hierarchies and their choirs; but, as we have seen rays of golden light suddenly transform a fair scene from beauty into glory, so the possession of the beatific vision has added to all the magnificence of the angelic nature that which no nature could merit, the supreme magnificence of glory.

And now, dear brethren, is there any revealed doctrine, short of the Incarnation itself, which should more powerfully draw our hearts to live for heaven than the knowledge that these bright and mighty angels are our brethren and protectors here on earth? None who read the Old and New Testament can doubt that the angels are ministering spirits sent to assist man to serve God, and that to them is given a charge over us that we stumble not in the manifold temptations of life. Nay, we each of us have a special angel to watch over us from birth till the judgment. And probably the whole universe is administered by angels. By them God works in history; by them He raises up mighty prophets, saints, and kings; by them He makes and destroys empires; by them He moves the stars of the great universe and the laws of this earth. And as it is thought that all phenomena of growth colour, and movement are nothing but motion transformed, so it seems that all that is and happens, excepting free will, is the work of angelic hands, which move whatever moves and appears upon the earth. I like to believe so. But be that as it may,

the angelic host are closely connected with our moral life on earth. What is also revealed is that the very highest spirits of the most divine hierarchy are entrusted with missions on earth. In the Scripture there is frequent mention of Seven great and mighty Spirits. In the prophet Zacharias where the future Church of Jesus Christ is revealed under the symbol of a seven-branched candlestick, the strong and sweet Providence of God which shall watch over His Church to the end is figured by the "Seven Eyes of the Lord that run to and fro over the whole earth" (*Zach.* iv. 10). In the opening verses of the Apocalypse, St. John wishes grace and peace to his brethren from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, "and from the Seven Spirits who are in sight of His throne" (*Apoc.* i. 4). In the fourth chapter, where the Revelation of the Ancient of Days seated on the great white throne, made of old to Daniel, is renewed to St. John, "seven lamps" are seen burning before the throne, which he is told are the "Seven Spirits of God". Again, in chapter the eighth, where the seventh seal is opened—the seal of the world's judgment and doom—the "Seven Angels standing in God's sight" take the trumpets of the dread summons, and the prophecy is unfolded in seven scenes of terror. And the Lamb is seen, "as it were slain, with seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the Seven Spirits of God who are *sent into all the earth*" (*Apoc.* v. 6). Thus it would appear that to these Seven Spirits is committed the administration of the universe, the loving, merciful Providence of the Lamb, and the judgment of the world.

Now, the number "seven" in Holy Scripture is not arithmetic, but mystery. "Seven" is a mystic term of fulness and completeness. These great angels are not seven as we count by earthly numerals; but they are a complete and august choir or hierarchy, nearest to the throne of God. Of their names only three are revealed—Michael, the prince of the army of heaven; Raphael, the guide and healer of men; and Gabriel, the messenger of the Incarnation. Other names there are which are to a certain degree recognised in the Church, if not by the Church; but these have not been matter of revelation. But what is revealed is that one august and magnificent order of angelic spirits, the highest and the nearest to the throne, are charged with the care of human concerns and sent as ministering spirits to man.

At the head of them, the prince, the leader, and also the type of them all, comes the Archangel Michael. He is revealed in the prophecy of Daniel as "the first among the supreme princes" (*Daniel* x. 13). He conquered Satan in the great primal revolt; and at the end of the world he will slay Antichrist on the slopes of Mount Olivet in sight of the Valley of Josaphat. And there he will ascend to the heavens, by the path which Christ ascended, to take his place as the Lord's standard-bearer—*signifer Sanctus Michael*—and to present both the living and the dead before the awful tribunal. Between these two great battles, Michael rests no more than Satan does. Other angels have in charge particular churches and kingdoms and individual men; Michael leads where the

battle is general. He was the guardian angel of the synagogue as he is of the Church of Christ; he was the watcher over the Sacred Humanity of our Lord when He lived on earth; and when Jesus departed to the heavens he became the special guard of each Sovereign Pontiff in his turn. Tradition shows him to us as intervening whenever any great event takes place which is to influence deeply and widely the fortunes of God's people. Pious belief sees him watching over the Ark as it was tossed upon the waters; staying the hand of Abraham raised to immolate Isaac; leading Moses to the bush, and smiting Pharaoh's host. He revealed himself to Josue in the Jordan valley as the "prince of the armies of the Lord". He is thought to have passed over the army of Sennacherib, slaying 185,000 men; to have released Peter from prison; and to have appeared to Constantine after his victory with these words, "It is I who gave thee these arms". Throughout the pagan world, after the rays of the primitive revelation had become dim, the honours paid to him were transferred to his rival, the demon. The "high-places," the stones set round in mystic circles on the mountain tops and in the wide plain, were temples for the worship of devils. And when Christianity came and these gathering places were dug down, then, upon the mountain or the level ground, the name of Michael was oftenest invoked. Hence in Wales the frequent occurrence of "St. Michael's Mount," or of the name of "Llanfihangel," Church of the Angel.

Over against this ancient town of Abergavenny

there stands, among the grand hills which surround it on every side, one which the piety of our forefathers has dedicated to the great Archangel, and which goes by the name of "Michael's Mount," or the "Holy Mountain," at this very day. On its top, in days gone by, heathen rites were performed and worship paid to those evil spirits who had usurped the place of the great Creator. But after the cross was planted in Gwent, probably by the immediate disciples of St. Lucius himself, a chapel was built upon the summit, and for many centuries that well-known hill was sanctified by the holy mysteries of Christianity. The shadow of the great Archangel has passed from the hill to this church in which we now are; his name is invoked here; and to the honour of Almighty God, under his invocation and that of the other spirits who stand in sight of the throne, we unveil to-day an altar of sculptured stone. It is before your eyes, in this sanctuary. You see there, high above the table of the altar, the armed figures of the seven archangels, guarding the resting-place of God made man. You see, in every attitude of praise and worship, with cymbal and trumpet and harp, the multitudes of the angelic host. As a work of art I will venture to say that it is admirable—original in conception and most successful in execution, an ornament of this church and sanctuary, and no slight addition to whatever is artistic and beautiful in the town. But it is also full of that symbolism and devotional significance which the Church loves to put into all she uses. The rapt worship of the angelic hierarchies reminds the weak

heart of man that he, too, was made for worship like this. If whilst yet on earth and bound by the fetters of his mortality he cannot "continually," as the angels, pour out his being in the praise of his Maker and his Father, yet it is his duty often to raise his heart to Him, and to dedicate and sanctify, by frequent prayer, a life of distraction and solicitude. The serene calmness of those mighty angels should teach us how little and how mean is everything that happens here below in comparison with the great purpose for which we are made; and how undisturbed by any earthly storm or trouble should be that breast in which God is truly King. The thought of the ministry of the angels on earth is well adapted to join earth with heaven. Our place is among those bright spirits, and the earth is only useful that we may secure that happy place; our brothers cannot wait till the day of our probation is over, but sweep down from their golden skies and flash swiftly and joyously through the dim air of this lower world, to assure us of their love and to be at hand in all our fear and trouble. O blessed spirits of ministering love! Lift us out of all baseness and worldly living, that we may live for heaven alone! Guard us against the tempter and against ourselves, that we may fit ourselves to sit in choirs where sin can never enter! Teach us to keep God before our eyes, and His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may pray as well as work, and work as well as pray, and so through His grace deserve at the last to be carried by your hands to the bliss of the vision of the Father.

I cannot conclude without asking your prayers for

the eternal welfare of the munificent donor of this altar, Mr. John Baker Gabb, whose name is well known in this town. Loving the beauty of the house of God, and full of gratitude for that gift of faith and fellowship with the Church which he has received, he has dedicated this offering to God through the intercession of St. Michael and the Seven Angels, and all the holy angels; he has desired also piously to commemorate the memory of his father. The late Mr. Baker Gabb was known in these districts, far and near, as an excellent Christian and a trusted legal adviser. He was sixty-two years of age when he entered the Catholic Church. He was led to the Church in great measure by the reading of two books; one was Cardinal Wiseman's *Lectures on the Catholic Church*, and the other was the work of Bishop Challoner called the *Lives of Missionary Priests*, in which are described the labours and sufferings of Catholic priests and laity during the Elizabethan and Jacobean persecutions. To this Church of St. Michael he was a considerable benefactor, although he died in the very year, 1858, in which it was begun. May God give rest to his soul!

And may God bless him to whom this church is indebted for this last addition to its adornment. I need not say that this is not by any means the first gift that Mr. John Baker Gabb has offered to God's holy temple. May the great Prince, St. Michael, and all the heavenly host, watch over him in all his ways; and may the august bearer of the Standard, the Prince over souls that are taken to the judgment, have him in his keeping in the day of dread summons.

XXI.

ST. MICHAEL, PROTECTOR OF THE CHURCH.

(Preached in the Church of St. Michael the Archangel, Liverpool,
on 29th September, 1895.)

“At that time shall rise up Michael, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people . . . and at that time shall thy people be saved.”—*Daniel* xii. 1, 2.

THIS great solemnity of the blessed Archangel Michael, whose name is invoked on this church and its flock, cannot but lift our hearts to the heavens. The name of this angel, seraph, minister of the Lord, leader of the armies of heaven, conqueror of Satan, protector of men, and standard-bearer of the Day of Judgment, needs must give these souls of ours a vision of a world far wider than that to which we are now confined, and a sense of great deeds, great issues, immeasurable space, unnumbered hosts, and the play of stupendous forces, none the less real that we so dimly conceive them. The name of St. Michael the Archangel stands for the sum of the invisible interference of God in His creation. Jesus is the source of grace; Mary is the channel of grace; Michael stands for the sword of God, which rids him of those who gainsay, the hammer of God which levels the hills and makes the rough ways plain, the special providence of God which

watches His children from their birth to their judgment.

St. Michael, like all the saints who are with God, intercedes for men; like all the angels he executes God's ministry. But because he is prince and leader his ministry is of the widest reach, and his intercession sets in motion the most far-reaching of the forces of the Incarnation.

This small earth of ours is only a grain of sand in the sight of God; yet the least of the souls which He has created has a place in His knowledge and His solicitude. He has proved this or proclaimed it by the Incarnation. The material laws of the universe are the expression of His will and the continuance of His creative act. These laws go on from year to year, from age to age, unbroken; on the whole, firm, fixed and constant. It is their results which we see in earth, ocean and sky; in this visible framework of things which seems, and which indeed is, so fair and so wonderful.

But the spiritual world of human souls, God's chief concern, is very different. Here the forces of free intelligence and will have to be reckoned with. Compared with the earth, the sea, the heavens, men's hearts are more substantial than the rock or the mountain, more unstable and uncontrolled than the widest waste of waters, and more mysterious, more incapable of being mapped and measured than the infinite depths of starry space. And yet the God Who took a human heart Himself to win hearts must follow all their wanderings, control all their forces,

hold the secret of all their mysteries. He must do so because he made them so, and because, come what may, He is and must be the Father and the Friend of all the rational creatures He has made.

Therefore we should expect that the influence of God, and the pressure and working of God upon the spiritual nature of man, should pervade all the universe of humanity. We should be prepared to find a subtle and diffused force penetrating everywhere like an atmosphere, and ready to leap out into activity wherever it met human aspiration or human operation. We should not be surprised to see the infinite love and solicitude of our Heavenly Father taking hold of visible things and of men themselves, as a sculptor puts his ideas into marble and bronze, and associating all that human eyes and ears take note of, with the one grand purpose of winning and keeping the immortal creatures who can only find their rest in Him. In one word, we should expect to find what we do find—the great kingdom of Divine grace; grace sanctifying, illuminating, strengthening, and impelling; grace which radiates from the Passion, from the Cross, and leaves no hidden place unvisited of all man's complex nature, and no step unaided of all his earthly journeying. We should expect the great dispensation of the Church—to keep alive the word of Jesus, and the sacramental touch of Jesus—visible in her ministry and her ministrations, but made living and powerful by the unseen inspiration and spiritual power of Him Who has made her a world within a world in order to save the world.

What may we conceive to ourselves that God sees most—that God regards most solicitously—when from His heights and His splendours of light He looks down upon this wandering orb of ours—this earth of His creation? Not its continents or its seas, its mutations or its tempests, its empires or its revolutions; but rather that Church which He has purchased with His blood, which is the sign of His love of souls, and the instrument of His saving of souls. This He will love—this He will cherish—this He will visit. This, by means of all the agencies which lie within the power of His mighty right Hand, He will guide and sustain; and nothing will stop Him except the barriers which He Himself has placed, of man's freedom, probation, and merit.

Do you believe that God interferes to uphold His Church? What do we mean by the interference of God? It is certain that everything that happens is done by God, except sin, which is not so much an act as the deflection of an act. It is certain also that grace is required for every meritorious work, and that sufficient grace is given to every human being. This being laid down, there comes that wide, that limitless field, which is called in Holy Scripture the field of His goodness—"How good is the God of Israel, to them that are of a right heart!" (*Ps. lxxiii. 1*); or of His mercy—"O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true!" (*Exodus xxxiv. 6*). That which urges Him to be "good" and to be merciful is either His own greater glory, or also the movement which the soul makes

(always through His grace) towards Him by faith, love, or contrition—a movement which, poor and feeble as it is in the best of us, it is His custom to meet with the royal outpouring of His munificence, as a prince might reward with treasure the poor man who offered him a humble flower. We mean, therefore, by the “interference” of God—of that God by Whom we live, move, and are—those kind and merciful acts of His which are not either part of the law of nature or of that general law of grace which, although its source is God’s free bounty, yet is, as a fact, so regular and constant that it is virtually and practically a law. The truth is, that the magnificent goodness of God respects neither law nor promise when it is a question of drawing the souls of men. He will not be bound. His children must have more than they have a right to—more than they deserve—more than their very aspirations can reach to. He must always be helping, inspiring, urging, enriching. He takes a nature that is richly gifted, and transforms it by His grace into sanctity. He visits a heart that is empty of all natural advantage, and with sovereign operation He equally fills it with all that heaven can give. He leads the child by the hand to prayer, purity, and sacrifice. He illuminates the spirits of young men and women who turn to Him ever so little, and sets them safe upon their road. He gives sinners chance after chance; and thousands of them, the moment they attend to Him, are carried home upon His shoulders. He guards His children even from temporal danger and bodily pain, to make them love Him. He

makes all visible things speak His name and urge His claims. He sways the vast universe, causing all the things that lie around us and above us and beneath our feet to co-operate with Him in that work of His which never ceases, the saving of the souls He has created.

It is on grounds like these that I say that God interferes to sustain and to protect His Church. The Church is His device, springing from the fruitfulness of His precious Blood, for making souls His own. Therefore, there is nothing on earth that He is equally solicitous about. It is true that the individual soul of you and of me is His object—not an institution or an order. It is also most true that He does at times save souls without the ministry of word and sacrament. But we are not concerned with what happens rarely and extraordinarily. The Church is the fold of His sheep. There is safety, guidance, shelter, and food. Therefore the Church is the world's grand visitation—the pledge and the dispenser of grace and salvation to the multitudes of the children of men. If God interferes in matters here below, how is it possible He should not interfere to sustain His Church?

Moreover, it cannot be questioned that we can see and ascertain His interference. We can see Him, age by age, guiding His Church like a ship, and keeping her, to use the phrase, afloat. For, if you observe, this is what must be done for the Church in every generation. She is perfect in her constitution and equipment; the Holy Spirit speaks through her, and the power of Christ is incarnate in her ministrations.

But she is a visible and earthly institution. She sails, not in the clouds or in the realms of fancy, but in the turbulent human ocean. She may be holy, apostolical, divine; but what if she goes to the bottom? She may be the ark of salvation; but what if she falls to pieces? What if her own crew desert her and set up a rival ship? Or again, what if she will not sail, and cannot reach those shores to which she was meant to carry the precious freight of her lading? I contend that you can see, with very ordinary attention, that God has been interfering in mercy and goodness, even since the day of Pentecost, to preserve and sustain His Church by saving her from the hands of those who would destroy her, by preventing her from being split in pieces by her own children, and by keeping up, unweakened and undiminished, that saving and converting power with which she started her career. I know that, speaking of this protection in general, we may truly say that Christ has promised it, and therefore in that sense it can hardly be called the result of God's interference; it is rather a law of the spiritual world. But our Lord and Saviour might have fulfilled this promise of His in many different ways. What He has done is what a man, and our brother, might have done. He has not used His omnipotence, but His love. He has not thundered in the heavens and made the earth stand awed and silent, but has hidden Himself behind human agencies, and moved men and men's works sweetly, silently for the most part, sometimes with power and the shadow of His fear, but generally as one who knows that there are

more mighty means for moving this solid earth than even to call the lightning from the heavens. In one word, He has chosen that the history of His Divine dealing with His Church should be a never-failing story and record of merciful interference.

The history of the Church has been written by many, and from many points of view; and there are none of us, perhaps, who know so little of it as not to be impressed with the strong and sweet dealings of the Father Who loves us during every century of her existence. But at this moment, on this day, I would do no more than lift one corner of the veil which hides from worldly eyes the intricate path and the varied course of Providence. For it is certain that the Lord of heaven and earth, here as in other things, uses ministers to do the will of His mercy. It seems not less certain that the appointed spirit who by himself and his armies guards and upholds the Church is the Archangel Michael. He it is who executes those interferences of God's mercy and power which are visible throughout the length of her annals. He is the prince of the heavenly host; God's Church is the dearest of all God's interest. Is it not right, is it not in accordance with the mind of Him Who willed the Incarnation, that the greatest angel should fight for the noblest empire?

The Holy Scriptures are full of St. Michael. We have there described his ministry in the heavens and his ministry on earth. The first glimpse that is given to mortal eyes of his service of his Creator, is when we see him contending with Satan in that awful and

tremendous battle which shook the heavens themselves. St. Michael was the first of all the servants of God. At the moment of his creation, when he with all the multitude of the angelic host stood free to serve or to rebel, one act or two of that lofty spiritual essence, quicker than the lightning, sufficed to carry through that probation which with grosser beings is prolonged for days and years. In those first flashes of his grand intelligence and will he gave himself to his God in worship, loyalty and burning love. He was the first of creatures that did this. One by nature as great as he took the other side; and then came the conflict—Michael and his angels, the dragon and his angels—it is thus the revelation names them (*Apoc.* xii. 7, 8). It was St. Michael's first act of ministerial service. God needed him not, nor his legions. But ministration is part of the Divine plan of creation. God does everything, but the angels are His instruments; and so are you and I, and every one in his rank and place. The Eternal executed His most just wrath and judgment upon the apostates by the ministry of those who stood faithful. That was the catastrophe described in the Apocalypse—"and their place was not found any more in heaven". That chapter of the Apocalypse of St. John goes on to say something suggestive and terrifying. The dragon who is cast out of the heavens falls to the earth. "Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (*Apoc.* xii. 12). Well do we know what is implied in those brief and preg-

nant words. Part of the drama of human probation is man's temptation by the demon. A certain power has been given to him. The chain that binds him has been a little lengthened out. He can suggest evil to the just, and he can stir up the unjust to acts of persecution and oppression. But there is one purpose which he took up the very moment that he fell from the heavens. He set himself to destroy the Church of God. For this, from the beginning, he has used all his intellect and set in motion all his legions. Whether in the primeval days when the Church was represented by the patriarchal tradition, or in the times of the Synagogue, or now when the Christian Church, founded at Pentecost, fills the world—he has understood what it was that it most behoved him to counteract and ruin. To cripple the Church, to divide her, to sterilise her, this has been his aim. For this he has urged on his own instruments by lust of power, corrupted her prelates and teachers by pride, and striven to cast upon her the chains of that sleep which worldliness so fatally brings on. "He persecuted the woman that brought forth the man-child" (*Apoc.* xii. 13). That woman symbolises the Church, and that sentence of the Apocalypse sums up the work of the demon during these centuries of Christianity.

Where must the Christian heart look for St. Michael, the great Archangel, during all these years of conflict? Where but at the very head of that army of the ministers of the Lamb, to whom it has been given to carry the power of God into this never-ceasing war? We seem to see him dimly through the mist and

twilight of the earliest records, even in the days when God began to form a chosen people to be His Church's prototype. Who was he, that chief angel of the three, who stood before Abraham in the vale of Mambre, as he sat in the door of his tent on that day at noon? (*Gen.* xviii. 1). The Jewish tradition, accepted by our best Christian interpreters, has handed down that it was St. Michael.* But in that visit was given the Divine charter and promise to the Father of all the faithful. When God commissioned Moses in that august vision at the burning bush, who was the angel who sustained the very personality of God the Redeemer? Again, Catholic tradition says it was Michael—Michael who spoke to the Hebrew herdsman, not as to a private person, but as to the future leader of Israel and the prince of the Synagogue; the same Michael who, not long afterwards, when Josue was camped before that Jericho which signified the powers of hell, suddenly appeared to him in the plain, holding a drawn sword, and spoke those words at which the great leader threw himself upon his face upon the ground: "I am prince of the host of the Lord, and now I am come" (*Josue* v. 14). Thus, and in many other apparitions too numerous to mention, he showed himself as Israel's champion, and by the prophet Daniel is called, as you have heard, the "great prince who standeth" for that people, their "own prince" and guardian. It is in this character that we catch mysterious glimpses of him in the Psalms and Prophecies, ruling the destinies of the race and command-

* See Cornelius a Lapide on the passage.

ing legions of blessed spirits; as in that vision of the prophet Zacharias, in which the "angel of the Lord" is seen as a mounted warrior in the grove of the myrtle trees with other riders, who answer him that they have walked through and patrolled the whole land; and then the princely leader lifts up his voice and prays for the people that he loves (*Zach.* i. 8).

That ancient covenant passed away. It was for another nation—on another and a wider field—that the great Archangel and his legions were finally to contend. One night St. Michael led his hosts to where a Child was born in Bethlehem of Juda, and their swords were for the moment sheathed and their heads unhelmeted whilst they chanted glory to God in heaven, and peace on earth to men. Holy Scripture nowhere mentions St. Michael in connection with our Blessed Lord. But we are told that Angels were at His birth, that Angels ministered to Him, that Angels comforted Him, that Angels kept guard at His tomb, that Angels conducted Him to the heavens. If the heavenly host did these things, their Prince and Leader was foremost in them all. There can be no rashness in saying as much as this. Many Saints and holy persons seem to have had it revealed to them that he was the Guardian of the Sacred Humanity, and that he was, and is still, the Guardian of the Blessed Sacrament. These pious beliefs undoubtedly indicate traditional Catholic leanings. But we do not need them. What the angelic army does its chief inspires; and what the Angels do in their ministry to their Sovereign Lord and Master made man, in com-

pliance with that command which was given when Jesus entered the world, "Let all the Angels of God adore Him," that their Chief must have done, not by the intermediary of any others, however august, but personally, with all the love and loyalty of his being. Silently, sorrowfully, he looked on whilst his Lord was poor and mocked and put to death. Jesus knew who was by His side: "Could not My Father give Me more than twelve legions of Angels?" (*Matt.* xxvi. 53). And once, when the disciples came back to Him saying that even the devils were subject to them in His name, He immediately uttered those rapt mysterious words, "I saw Satan falling from heaven like lightning!" (*Luke* x. 18). May He in that hour have communed with His faithful minister, and, looking back to the day when the great Archangel himself brought about this catastrophe, have had it in His Sacred Heart that as Michael first routed Satan in Heaven, so he was also to baffle and quell him on earth, beginning with the days when the disciples wondered at their power, and going on during all the generations in which poor weak men, trusting in faith, shall also marvel without ceasing that they can overcome the persecutor, the heretic, and the worldling, instruments of him who fell in that great fall? What was Abraham, or Moses, or the Judges, or the Kings, or the Prophets, in comparison with the great Church, the wide Church, the immortal Church, the mother of men, the nurse of Saints, the saving of the world? If the great Angels, with St. Michael, visited the earth in the days before Gabriel spoke to Mary, what must

they be doing now, and what must they have been doing during all these centuries?

There can be no question as to the mind of the Church at this present moment on the subject of St. Michael's office and guardianship. One of the most momentous steps ever taken by a Sovereign Pontiff was to order those prayers for the Church which are now said at the end of every Mass. When we consider the vast number of priests and of people whom this order affects, and the daily recurrence of its obligation, we see and understand the enormous spiritual machinery it sets in motion, and the effort which it calls for in every quarter of the Christian world. It is like the preaching of a new Crusade. The Holy See itself has undertaken to stir up the universal flock to the task of saving the Ark of God. And what Saint besides Mary, Mother of God, is conspicuously and specially invoked in this united militant cry of the Catholic world? Who but the great Archangel? "Defend us in the day of battle! Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil! May God rebuke him!" This was the judicial word of power with which Michael defeated Satan in that contest—one among many—when he succeeded in concealing the body of Moses, and so saving Israel from the dangers of idolatry. "May God rebuke him! And do thou, Prince of the heavenly host by the power of God, thrust down into hell Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world!" At this hour, therefore, of the Church's destinies we are ranged under the banner of St. Michael. Can we do better than seize the

opportunity of this principal Feast in order to renew our loyalty to the cause of that Church we ought to love so deeply and cherish so devoutly, and at the same time to cheer our hopes and lift our courage by the thought that we have such unconquered auxiliaries as St. Michael and his heavenly host ?

There is nothing, except direct revelation, which evinces so clearly the existence of God and the action of His Providence as history. In the written annals of man and nations, you see, as if you looked down from a mountain-top, the wide landscape of things that have come to pass and are now marshalled in their order, irrevocable and monumental. You see whole cycles of events, their beginning, their development, and their end. You see the true causes of success and the true reasons of failure. You see the will and the wisdom of One Who is irresistible. You see the true dimensions of what once was hailed as filling the universe; the real significance and living power of certain humble beginnings; and the indestructible vitality of the things which have God for their author and His servants for their upholders. And nowhere is all this so clear as in the history of the Church herself.

It is not, however, my intention to quote history to-day. But I would illustrate, by a passing reference to history, certain principles or methods of God's dealing with His Church which should never be forgotten by the children of the Church, and least of all in the days in which we live.

And, first, it is certain that a large part of the life

of that immortal Church is spent in the throes and the agonies of persecution. Persecution is the fiery breath of the dragon, who pursueth the woman and her child. The Church is, and must always be, open to persecution, because she is not only a spiritual idea, but a visible kingdom. The dragon cannot touch her essential life; but he can reach her pastors and her children. His instruments are rulers, ministers, governments; any cruel, malicious, or mistaken man or men who can command power, or money, or executioners, or policemen. Sometimes persecution is merely the malice or ignorance of the savage; sometimes it is the result of the cold calculations of the philosopher, the politician, or the despot. Sometimes it is the casual violence of a mob; sometimes the organised onslaught of an empire. Sometimes there are bloodshed, torture, and death; at others, imprisonment, fines, and confiscation. Sometimes it is the Sovereign Pontiff who is attacked; at others it is the bishops, the monastic bodies, or the priest and his flock. Sometimes churches are shut up or destroyed, and schools starved out; sometimes the priest's poor pittance is taken from him; and sometimes, again, where the helpless child and the ailing poor are gathered for food and shelter, jealous hands lock the doors against the Church's ministrations. If you read the first chapter of the Apocalypse, not to say the twelfth, you find that these things are the work of the devil. He began to be busy before the last of the Apostles was dead; he has been busy in every age; and he is busy at this moment.

The general conclusion that we draw from the history of every persecution is this, that God has visibly interfered; that such interference has been the work of St. Michael and his Angels; and that there has been victory for the Church.

There were, for example, the great persecutions, ten in number, of the Roman Empire. Where was Michael—where was Christ—during those long three centuries, when every generation there were fresh edicts and fresh holocausts; when the fathers smote down the fathers, and the sons, when their time came, the sons; when Christianity had to hide itself in catacombs and the wilderness? Not far off. The legions of the Angels were close at hand, sustaining and encouraging, teaching the persecuted ones how to conquer even by dying. Neither were they always out of sight. When Romanus was looking at the martyrdom of St. Lawrence he saw an Angel descend from heaven and comfort the great champion of Christ, wiping the sweat from his face and the blood from his body. When St. Vincent, that St. Lawrence of the Church of Spain, was flung into his dungeon at Saragossa, after a day of rack and fire, a mere bleeding heap of dislocated bones, the blessed spirits of St. Michael's army thronged down into the prison, and filled it with heavenly light and song; and the holy martyr in ecstasy cried out to the wondering guards, "Behold, it is my brethren who have come to me! Will you not recognise the greatness of the King Whom we serve?" When the great wonder-worker, Felix of Nola, lay fettered in his dungeon, an Angel came and broke his

iron bonds and led him out to the hills, where his bishop, St. Maximus, lay. An Angel warned St. Polycarp of what awaited him in the Roman amphitheatre. An Angel brought a message to St. Agatha. An Angel protected St. Agnes. Two Angels brought joy and refreshment into the prison of the young soldier Procopius, the illustrious martyr of Palestine. Angels sang around the soldier Theodore, the generous destroyer of idolatry, the patron of our Crusaders, when he lay torn with scourges awaiting death. And who can read unmoved that history, given by the Bollandists on the 5th of June, of those 9000 or 10,000 Roman soldiers, part of the army of the Emperor Hadrian in Armenia, who were converted by an Angel, led to victory by an Angel, and then, after they had been scourged and crowned with thorns and put to death by crucifixion, were finally buried in one huge grave by the Angels themselves! Christ and St. Michael and his hosts were not far from the martyrs. Their invisible cohorts stood beside the rack, the fire, and the sword; and when the glorious servants of Jesus in their very torture felt themselves strong, and fearless, and even joyous, it was the magic of heaven, ministered by the spirits of light, strength, and peace, which wrought such miracles, and transformed flesh and blood into steel and adamant. And at last, when the victory was to declare itself, and the fruits of persecution were to be made visible to the world, who was it but Michael who displayed in the skies over the Roman Campagna the Standard of the Cross in which Constantine was told he was to conquer?

There have been persecutions since that day ; persecutions of barbarian, persecutions of medieval tyrants, persecutions of modern revolution. St. Bernard, speaking in the midst of medieval Catholicism, having before his mind all the troubles the Church had then to endure from usurping princes and overbearing soldiers, says that it is the angels who are intended by that passage of Isaias : " Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen, all the day and all the night " (*Is.* lxii. 6). And he cries out to the Church : " Well is it with thee in the place of thy pilgrimage, for help cometh to thee from the heavens and from the earth " (*Sermon lxxvii. on the Canticles*). Once, at the consecration of the Church of her monastery, at the moment when the antiphon *Fundamenta templi* was chanted, St. Gertrude saw the angelic spirits thronging round the walls, like soldiers in the battlements of a fortress, as if they were guarding the Church and watching for its enemies. Their golden wings, as they touched each other, sounded in exquisite melody, a symbol of their perfect and peaceful obedience to their Creator (*Rev.*, part iv. chap. lx.). During the persecutions in England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have an occasional glimpse of the confidence of the suffering Catholics in the protection of St. Michael and his hosts ; as when St. Mary's Convent at York was threatened (in 1686) with destruction by a mob, and the picture of St. Michael was hung over the door, and then, as by a miracle, the officers and the furious people melted away, and the convent was left at peace. And it is

touching to find Cardinal Allen, a native of the Fylde of Lancashire, leaving by his will the fittings of his chapel, should the faith come back to England, to the old mother church of the Fylde, St. Michael-le-Wyre.

Naturally, the work of the holy angels for the Church is most clearly to be seen in their never-ending contest with the persecutors. When the Church comes to be in danger from her own children, who would break her in pieces from within, then the hand of Satan is less visible, and the spear of Michael not so sensible. But as the unity of the Church throughout the ages has been the work of the Papacy, therefore the heavenly champions have gathered in immense strength around the Sovereign Pontiff, and like guards of the body of the sovereign, they have fought for the Pope in every century. The angel who delivered Peter out of prison is generally conceived to have been St. Michael. It was St. Michael who put an end to the persecutions, and brought Constantine to Pope St. Sylvester. It was St. Michael who took under his protection the beginnings of the reign of Gregory the Great, and who, from his shrine of St. Angelo, having sheathed the sword of calamity, according to the legend, carried the word and force of that great Pope into every quarter of the world, thus laying the foundations of the new Christendom. St. Leo IX. inaugurated by a pilgrimage to the great sanctuary of St. Michael at Gargano, in South Italy, a reign which was to be one perpetual conflict with the simony and erastianism of the eleventh century. St. Gregory VII. went to the same shrine, and fought the same

battle under the same protection, with even more toil and greater success. St. Pius went there too, and saved Europe from the Turk by the help of our Lady and St. Michael. And Pius IX., when the enemy began to close in upon him, looked to St. Michael, talked of St. Michael, placed his cause in the hands of St. Michael, who, alas! was not to bring him then any visible or final victory, but was to stand beside him whilst he and the people of God suffered the blows and injuries of the enemy; triumphing, indeed, in the sight of God, Who counts all these things against the hour when He gives His hosts the signal to sweep the evil powers into the gulf of darkness.

Not once but many times has the great Archangel seemed to break through the mystery and the obscurity of the spiritual world, and to diffuse over Europe a sense of his presence, and the joy and profit of renewed devotion to his glorious principedom. First there was that splendid temple which Constantine built, or rather dedicated to him, on the shores of the Bosphorus, to which for ages pilgrims came from every land, and whence no one went away with prayer unheard. Next, at the moment when the Roman Empire was crumbling, when Theodoric was fighting Odoacer in Italy, and when St. Benedict was writing his Rule at Monte Cassino, there was the apparition which we commemorate on the 8th of May. Mount Gargano is a lofty promontory which stands boldly out from the shores of Southern Italy into the Adriatic. At its foot, on the landward side, was built

the ancient Roman town of Sepuntum. God made use of the incident of the loss of straying cattle to intimate that His Angel was to be honoured there, and St. Michael appeared to the Bishop of Seponto and said: "I am the Archangel Michael, one of those who stand for ever before the face of the Lord. I have chosen this place in which to be venerated upon earth, and I shall protect and guard it for ever." A huge rock-cavern was dedicated, amidst prodigies of every kind; the Sovereign Pontiff visited the new sanctuary the wonderful recovery of Italy in the sixth century began; pilgrims from that time flocked to the shrine from all Europe. The conquering Normans of the eleventh and twelfth centuries seem to have been called to the aid of the Holy See by the prayers of the devout visitants of this holy mountain. The Emperor St. Henry spent the night alone in the grotto, and saw a vision of angels, and heard their chant. It was there that Otho III. met St. Nilus, the famous hermit, at whose feet he threw his royal crown. As late as 1656 we have the history of a pestilence—almost contemporary with the great plague of London—suddenly stopping after a pilgrimage to Mount Gargano. And in our own days the crowds still gather on this day to the spot where St. Michael revealed himself 1400 years ago.

The celebrated sanctuary of St. Michael's Mount in Brittany began to be frequented in the eighth century, when the Mahometan power was menacing the South of France. It was St. Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, who built an oratory to St. Michael on the summit of

that lofty and sea-girt rock. Here, doubtless, as at Mount Gargano and elsewhere in Europe, but especially in Wales and Brittany, the towering mountain had been the scene of druidical and diabolical worship. Michael was the dragon's antagonist, and wherever there were traces on those summits of the dominion of Satan, the piety of our forefathers made a dedication to St. Michael, as you may yet see in many a spot of ancient Britain. The great champion of the Church was not slow to respond; nay, sometimes as we see he took the initiative, and to hundreds of sanctuaries of St. Michael throughout Europe, devout populations pressed up stony paths on mountain sides, declaring their faith in God and their trust in the angelic host of heaven.

In these days of ours, these latest days, when persecution has assumed such puzzling shapes, when the very dragon has found out new ways of changing himself into an angel of light; when the Church has more to fear from pens which drop venom than from the clubs of the barbarians or the Greek fire of the Saracen, what are the children of the Church waiting for? Where are our pilgrimages, our national vows, our Crusades? Do we expect a new apparition of the Prince of the Angels? Are we indifferent because the host of the Lord seems to have retreated into its own heavenly country—because no mountain-top is irradiated with Michael's spear, and no midnight skies flash with the banners of principalities and powers? I know not what sign we want. Is there not a sign?

Let me recall to you a passage in a far-off history.

It was when Israel had entered the promised land, but the Madianite and the Amalecite were still strong and menacing. An Angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree, waiting for Gedeon, the leader that was to be. And he greeted Gedeon, who said to him in reply, "If the Lord be with us, why have these evils fallen upon us? Where are His miracles which our fathers have told us of? The Lord hath forsaken us!" (*Judges* vi. 11 *sqq.*). Then, to convince him and to chide him for his want of faith, the Angel stretched forth his rod, the symbol of angelic power, and touched the sacrifice which lay upon the rock—and behold! there arose a fire from the rock, and consumed the sacrifice. In those days the Angels came down to announce deliverance; in these days a word, more clear than that of any prophet, more widely noted than any supernatural proclamation made by a messenger from the skies, has gone forth bidding the Christian world expect its deliverance. And that no man may hesitate to believe, the first effect of that word of the Pontiff has been to kindle a fire from the very rock—to force into prayer the hearts, not of a few pious people, but of the whole Catholic world.

I am not saying that this united prayer, through St. Michael, is as fervent as it should be, as pure, or as zealously kept up. It is prayer, and it is a wonderful sign. But no Catholic believer ought to be content until that prayer storms the heights of heaven. As it is, we say or hear it every day; and, like things of every day, it grows common and unregarded. So did the shrines of the ancient times. They were left, too

many of them, to the storms and the rain of the mountain-top; their sanctuaries fell to ruin, and their stones decayed; the paths that led up to them were grown over with thorns, and the place of miracles became a solitude. Yet the angels were always as near, and as mighty, and as zealous for God's honour and men's souls. But it is the law of the spiritual world; man must do his little that God may show His might. It was not a great thing that peasants or town people should walk in procession to a chapel, or that bishop and clergy should follow the cross to the shrine of a Saint. But it was faith and love and trust; it was sacrifice; it was prayer; it was piety. And when these outward things were given up, it was a too sure sign that the inward springs had ceased to flow.

Let us believe in prayer; in short prayers it may be, in easy prayer—no matter, let us believe and let us persevere.

What could St. Michael and his hosts do for us at this hour? They could restore the Pontiff to his liberty; they could free the Church in certain European countries from the murderous grip of the civil law; they could make men respect the Sacraments of the New Covenant, the dispensers of the power of the Precious Blood; they could sweep down upon the floors of public institutions and, walking to and fro as they did in the Babylonian furnace, could guard our children from the fire; they could reinforce the struggling churches in countries where Catholics are in a minority, and lead the majority from bitterness and blind injustice to reason and kindness, and so

preserve the Christian education of a nation, and the full Catholic training of our own poor little ones; and, if the need were, one of them could visit the camp of the Assyrian as of old, and even judge, slay, and exterminate. These things they could do, with more ease than a man takes up his staff for a journey. And when we ask why they do them not, let us first be sure we do not ask in the spirit of Gedeon—the spirit of those who will not do their own part. But if this public prayer is a true, real, warm, persevering effort of the heart, then we have only to watch with attention, and, as one sees the meteors begin to play down in the south when the light of the summer's day is failing, so shall we discern the signs of the interference of God and His angels. It will be now a conversion, and now a great act of Christian generosity; now a powerful society founded, now the fetters of an abuse struck off for ever; now a victory for the Sovereign Pontiff, now a missionary triumph among the heathen; now a withering persecution lived through and beaten back; or again, bad laws reversed, public opinion brought round to Christian truth, good literature rising like a tide, great and zealous pastors springing up as from the very earth. Pray, and these things will be; look, and you will see them come to pass. Not a prayer, not a man can be spared. Do not our leaders tell us that the efforts of the dragon were never better organised than they are now? That must be so, because the enemy always seizes upon the most effective weapons of the age or of the day; and in these days we have a most highly

developed press, with all its powerful adjuncts. Such an instrument lends itself much more readily to the intelligence of Satan than iron, or steel, or even gold. We are told of dark masonic leagues, of Satanic parliaments, of congresses of atheists sworn to exterminate the Church and the name of Christ. Do not be too sure there are not such things. But if there were not; if the demon were even so simple as to do all his fighting with the openness of a child and the bows and arrows of a savage, yet still there is enough of argument, declamation, misrepresentation, prejudice, and hostility within the shortest distance of every one of us, to stir up the dullest heart in the defence of Christ and His kingdom.

Then let us pray through St. Michael's intercession. As of old, so on this day he stands beside the altar, with a golden thurible in his hand. Give him, as he had then, abundance of incense, abundance of prayer and intercession, and from his censer it must rise to the throne of God.

And may he, the Angel of peace, the Angel of loyalty, the Angel of judgment, visit this church and flock, and bring with him God's own peace, and true faith and love, and the promise of a happy death to pastor and to people.

XXII.

BLESSED JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE.

(Preached in the Church of St. Vincent, at Sheffield, during the Triduo in honour of his beatification, 1st June, 1890.)

“To me is given this grace to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God.”—*Eph.* iii. 8, 9.

EVERY Saint is light to the world. And every Saint helps the world to understand one and the same Mystery—the Mystery of the Cross. It is the grand and only Mystery. From all eternity it was hidden in God; that is, it was God’s everlasting secret, to be revealed in His own time, to be insisted upon from generation to generation. It was to be the burthen of all preaching, the fount and spring of all saving grace, the light of the human race, the salvation of the spirit and of the flesh. To “enlighten all men that they may see,”—this is the work of Jesus, and His only work. For this He has commissioned teachers, breathed on ministers, illuminated doctors, and strengthened martyrs.

On this solemn day, when we rejoice and bless God that the seal of recognition has been placed by the supreme See on a martyr of our own times, we cannot honour him more or do better for ourselves than study

with devotion this Mystery of the Cross in his heart his spirit, and his flesh. For he, like the grand martyrs and confessors of other days, was sent to preach it; and we, at least, thanks to our faith and fellowship with the holy Roman Church, can use the holy light which in him is given to the world, and “comprehend with all the saints” and servants of God in every age “what is the length and breadth and height and depth” (*Eph.* iii. 18)—what is the profound meaning of a life and a martyrdom like that of the Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre, of the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul, Martyr of Jesus Christ.

It is not quite ninety years since the Blessed John Gabriel was born; it is nearly fifty years since he was strangled on a cross in the chief town of a Chinese province. He received his crown at the early age of thirty-eight. There are persons still living who are as old as he would have been had he lived till now. One of his brothers, a member of the Congregation of the Mission. One of his sisters is still living, in that holy Institute of Sisters of Charity, founded by his own father, St. Vincent de Paul. The Holy See is always slow to raise a mortal man to the altars of the Church. But we may truly call this martyr a martyr of our own times. It was only some twenty years after his native land had sent him to preach to the heathen that she received back his precious remains. The friends, the students, the fellow-labourers of his early days, who had admired his holy life, lived to see him on the road to canonisation. The venerable

Superior of the Mission and of the Sisters, M. Etienne, who had really decided the doubt as to his being sent on the China mission, had the happiness, on January 6, 1860, of receiving into the Mother Home at Paris that precious body, crowned with the double aureola of apostle and martyr. He was born in France—France lent him to the apostolate—he lies now again in France, the honoured object of veneration; and whilst his soul is with the white-robed army above, his relics are the centre of prayer, the fountain of apostolic desire, the source of heroic aspiration, in a land which has produced so many heroes and so many saints.

It would be impossible, to-day, to give you an adequate biography of the blessed martyr who was beatified by Pope Leo XIII. in December last.

But no one can read his life and martyrdom without seeing that we have in this French priest who was put to death for the faith in China fifty years ago, at the age of thirty-eight, a most impressive instance of the power of the work of the Cross of Christ. We see it in his preparation, in his vocation, in his work, and most conspicuously in his passion.

Let us first of all consider how he took up this blessed Cross which was to glorify him—what we may call his preparation. This is the first step in a Saint's history, to take up Christ's Cross. A Saint learns very quickly the grand truth that the only master worth serving is Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ carries a Cross and travels along a painful road, which leads to Calvary. He learns to recognise two enemies,

selfishness and voluptuousness—the spirit of hard pride and the spirit of self-indulgence. He understands that life eternal can only be won by violence, but by a violence which is made sweet and tranquil by the example of Jesus. Every Christian has to learn this. The Saints learned it thoroughly. Look at this Saint of ours.

He was a poor boy, born of people very moderately furnished with this world's goods. From his infancy he seemed, in the phrase of Holy Scripture, to “walk before God”. Some men live and die, and never recognise that God is close to them. Too many of us are far too much taken up with the passing day, the fleeting moment, to be impressed with the nearness of Him Who is our Friend, our Father, our Lord and Master, our only end and sovereign good. This child seemed to have come into the world as from some sweet and solemn presence, which haunted him even before the reign of reason began. It made him serious among his companions. It made him thirst for the word of God, and the refreshment of religious truth. It filled him with an instinctive horror of sin. It drew him to the Church and the blessed Sacrament. It moulded his spirit and his very look and gesture, so that people said he was a Saint. His first communion was to him a kind of realisation of the happiness of the blessed. At school, in the seminary, in the noviceship, he drew nearer to God as his years increased. Thus, it is no wonder that those who knew him during the years of his childhood are so emphatic in drawing attention to his singular piety.

Piety! A word that is much misunderstood and even much abused. Counterfeit piety is detestable. True piety is the realisation of our being's purpose. Piety is a tender and sensitive love of God, of our blessed Lord, of the mother of Jesus, of the saints, and of holy things. It springs from faith, and it leads to self-denial. It lives deep down in the heart, but it animates the body, shines in the eyes, moves the hands, and is felt in the voice. In a child it is sweet and lovely to see, although a child's piety may have many imperfections. It may be shallow, easily disturbed, subject to human respect, given to the service of the eye, and sometimes uninstructed and foolish. Yet it is sweet to see, just as the buds and blossoms of the spring are sweet to see, and great is the responsibility of those whose duty it is to watch it and to cultivate it. But in this child, whom the blessings of sweetness prevented—that is, in whom the drawings of Divine grace were beforehand even with nature and temper—piety was the true and matured effect of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are told that he breathed around him the perfume of Divine grace. Genuine piety has three qualities; it is self-denying, charitable, and courageous. It is self-denying, because self-indulgence or softness kills the true love of God. It is kind and charitable, because it sees Jesus Christ in every creature. And it is courageous, because human respect and the custom of the world soon extinguish the piety of a soul that is a coward. Those who lived with this blessed martyr in his early days, used to see a quiet youth, with eyes

modestly cast down and joined hands, kneeling in chapel, or with equal modesty following the lectures of his professors, or with tranquil voice and retiring manners taking his part in the recreation. But what self-mastery! what courage! what tender kindness to others! They said he was pious, and a Saint. They did not know how true it was! Already had he taken up the Cross; already had he chosen to follow Christ; already was he crucifying nature, zealously applying himself to the practice of the crucifying virtues of patience, poverty, and obedience, and wearying his confessors to let him crucify his very flesh. The great mystery was beginning to work in him, as in every Saint who has ever lived. He knew now and understood that safety and peace and strength are in the Cross, and in the Cross alone. Thus as child, as seminarist, as novice, as religious, as teacher, as priest, he lived till he was thirty.

The hour came when the preparation had gone far enough. The altar of the holocaust was built up, the victim was laid thereon—yes, and the torch was already applied to the wood; and now the flame was to leap up to heaven. Moments come in the lives of God's servants which can only be described as "conversions". Sometimes the circumstances are even miraculous, as with St. Augustine, or with St. Catherine of Siena when she was espoused by Christ. Sometimes the conversion is from a life of sin; more frequently it is from a lower state of supernatural life to a higher. Sometimes in a lifetime there are many moments of conversion. The character of them all is

the same; there is the swift light and strong impulse to live for God and God alone. But they may and do differ in numberless ways. The sinner may become an heroic penitent, the lukewarm religious a fervent ascetic, the laborious preacher an interior man, the busy man of the world a model of constant prayer. The thoughtless child may grow suddenly earnest, or the young man may find his vocation. Or again, the Saint, with all his intimate knowledge of God's ways and experience of His light, may find himself in the presence of a new world of spiritual reality, the existence of which he had never even suspected during all the time he had served the Lord of all things; as perhaps happened to St. Vincent de Paul when, eighteen years before his death, he began to make that daily special preparation for his last hour. It seems to me that we can perfectly trace in the Blessed Martyr of this day's solemnity the moment of his decisive call to the heroic life of the Apostle. His brother Louis had died at sea, in the Indian Ocean, on his way to China as a missionary. In a letter written soon after hearing of this, he exclaims, "His life was that of an Angel, and he sought the martyr's death. Oh that I—I might be found worthy to fill his place! That I could expiate my sins by martyrdom such as his innocent soul sighed for! Alas! I am already thirty years old, and I have not yet learnt how to live! When shall I learn how to die? Time is moving on like a swift shadow, and without knowing it we are approaching eternity!"

Here is the true accent of the heroic soul. To know

what life is; to know how to die—to die for Jesus! It was with this new revelation of ancient truth in his heart that he went on a short visit to his parents, to console them on the brother's death. Here he told them definitely that God was urging him to devote himself to the China Mission, and that he was resolved to do all that depended on himself in order to carry out the Divine will. He told them this, and then he said the same thing to his uncle, that holy and venerable priest of his own Congregation who had been so much to him all his life. They all tried to dissuade him. "You are not strong enough; you will die like your brother. If you do reach China, you will certainly be martyred." "Ah! if it were only my happy lot! Since God has died for us, we should never fear to die for Him."

Slowly, Almighty God showed him the way to his heart's desire. For three years from the time of his brother's death (1832) he waited in obedience and prayer. He was made novice master during that time in the Mother House at Paris. We are told that he seemed to breathe out sanctifying grace. He was most exact, most sympathetic, most devoted. His lessons on the Epistles of St. Paul are spoken of as marvellous outpourings of spiritual insight. Like St. Paul, his grand teaching always was, "Live yourselves no longer, but let Christ live in you" (*Gal.* ii. 20). Every morning when he said his saintly and edifying Mass he prayed at the Consecration for the grace of one day shedding his blood for Jesus Christ. No wonder that he transformed the Seminary, and that many of the

young men whom he had brought up afterwards died with joy for their Lord on the foreign missions. He used to love to speak of the Venerable Father Clet of his own Congregation, who died for the faith in China a few years ago. "What a lovely death! Pray that my end may be like his!" He showed the novices one day the bloodstained habit of his martyred *confrère*, and the rope which had strangled him. "What happiness for us if we had the same good fortune!" And he used to handle those precious relics of martyred priests, studying the stains of blood, his countenance all on fire, and his whole being drinking in the martyr's inspiration. At last, as the years and months went on, he felt himself urged to try again. Missionaries were on the point of departing for China. He went and threw himself at the feet of the Superior, and begged him with tears no longer to oppose his vocation. Superior, doctor, and council at length gave in, and, chiefly through the influence of Père Etienne, he obtained permission to start for China.

There are two dark abysses of heathenism yet on this earth; one is Central Africa, the other is China. The zealous servants of our Lord Jesus Christ are surrounding and penetrating Africa. As for China, conceive a population of more than 400 millions, an empire as large as all Europe put together; an unchanging, rigid, ironbound civilisation. The Chinese discovered printing and gunpowder ages before Europe discovered them; they had banking and postal systems and competitive examinations when this country was barbarous. But the narrowness of their hearts has

killed the acuteness of their minds. No nation can be large-hearted or progressive without certain moral qualities—without God and the Incarnation. From very early times the messengers of light have penetrated into China. Speaking generally, it has been at all times death for a foreigner to teach religion to the Chinese. Yet the Jesuit Fathers, 300 years ago, were honoured as men of science at Peking; the cathedral which stood till the other was built with money contributed by Louis XIV. Such great French names as Bouvet, Gerbillon, Gaubil, Parennin, and Amyot made Christianity illustrious, even at the court of the emperor. But the dark spirit of barbarous intolerance put an end to this short period of light and hope. Churches were destroyed and Christians expelled. Up to a few years ago, a missionary to China knew that if it were known that he was a foreigner, he would probably be tortured, and certainly put to death. Yet the supply of soldiers of Christ has never ceased.

It was from the east side that the forces of the Cross made their assault on this great stronghold of Satan. The Corea, Annam, Siam—these names recall hundreds of pages in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* and the *Missions Etrangères*, and bring to mind scores of devoted priests and many martyred confessors, both European and native. Our Saint, however, was not destined for the Corea, or Tonkin, or Annam, or Siam, but for the interior—the land of the great delta of the Yellow River, the province of Honan. There, on the steps of the mountains which

rise from the vast plain which the dark-coloured river too often lays waste in its impetuous course from the Great Wall to the Yellow Sea, he was to find a Christian colony.

We cannot follow his voyage from Havre to Macao, from Macao inland for a thousand miles. He bade adieu to his dear France with tears, but with a happy heart. On the ocean, when the loneliness was intense, or when the storms came on, he felt how sweet a thing it was to be with God, and to belong altogether to God. In the intervals of delay, when he was studying Chinese and preparing himself by fervent retreats for his work, his thought was always Jesus Christ. "Oh, that we had more missionaries!—real missionaries!—missionaries filled with that one science of St. Paul—the science of Christ crucified!" Once on his painful journey, when he came on the graves of his predecessors, priests and bishops who had laid down their lives in the midst of their flock, he tells us how their spirit seemed to take hold upon him.

When he left the great river and toiled up the mountain sides, he would make the Way of the Cross!—no missionary ever makes progress along any other way. As he realised more and more the immense distances and the teeming population of the great empire, he would exclaim, "May God multiply missionaries! The conversion of China depends on the prayers of the Christians of Europe. . . . Oh, that all would enrol themselves in the Association for the Propagation of the Faith! Your brethren cry to you!" "Send us Francis Xaviers," he exclaims, "in

order that this vast empire may become the heritage of the Lord!"

I wish I had time to show you the Apostle at work. Imagine to yourselves a kind of mountain-parish, eight or ten miles long and not quite so broad. The number of Christians (in Hou-peh, where he laboured last) would be about 2000; the Pagans very few. In the middle of the district stood the mission-house. Night and day the priest had to be ready; Chinese converts are very fearful of dying without the sacraments. On the festivals of the Church there would be crowds for confession and communion; three priests would be kept hard at work. Every day there would be many fathers of families and pious women at Mass. On Sundays the whole district would crowd in. There would be morning prayers, catechism, holy Mass, sermon, and catechism for the children. Then some would go away, but many would remain all day, and the Rosary would go on till afternoon, and there would then be the Way of the Cross, confraternities, and a renewal of that perpetual catechism. Or there would be that kind of conference which is peculiar to the missions in a land of few books; that is to say, the subject would have been given out the week before, ten or twelve native catechists or young scholars would take part as best they could, and the whole would be wound up by the priest. Like the crowds in the desert, these gatherings would seem to forget the requirements of the body, and the worn-out priest would go on giving the sacraments, interviewing this one and that one, and even performing the functions

of a magistrate, till far on into the night. The church was only four mud walls, with a straw roof and bare flags; the altar a common table with a canopy over it. But the living stones of the Church were there—the souls of men; and the strong foundations and walls of the world-wide Church of Christ—and Christ Himself in the midst of His flock.

Thus the Blessed Gabriel laboured. His toilsome journeys never ceased. From home to home he went, from family to family, devoting himself to these poor people whose poverty and wretchedness were extreme, and who had no hope or comfort except in religion. He had a peculiar feeling that God watched over the dying hours of these poor Chinese who gave themselves up to him. He used to feel as if he would like to die himself, abandoned by all, in some obscure corner of the hills; and he said that no one could be really desolate or alone who placed himself in the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

And all this time his personal austerities never ceased. He had to endure heat, fatigue, and dirt; but besides that he wore an iron girdle round his waist! Think of that, you who seek consolation after every little act of God's service! And God sent him now one of those supreme trials which finally cleanse the soul, and prepare it for union. He was already purified and detached from sensible things; now his whole mind and will were to be purged from the last relics of self. He experienced the torment of despair—that awful darkness of the soul, which in one moment seems to shut out God even from the saints of God;

that participation of the Agony in the Garden, which is the hardest of all things to bear. But he clung the faster to Christ. It was not an Angel who came, but Jesus Christ Himself. "Why are you fearful? Have I not died for you? Place your hand in My side and cease to fear you will be lost." Then comfort came back, and he was himself again.

How the persecution broke out in Hou-peh is not easy to say. The viceroys of the provinces in this enormous empire have much power; so have the superior mandarins. Where everything is done by corruption and bribery, local persecutions (considering the state of the standing laws) are naturally to be expected. It was on Sunday the Octave of the Nativity of our Lady, the feast of her Holy Name, 1839, just as the last Mass was ending, that the Chinese soldiers burst in on the humble church. The blessed confessor escaped for the moment, but a day or two afterwards, like his Divine Master, he was betrayed. He was dragged before a mandarin.

He is now at the beginning of his conflict. Behold him kneeling before the Chinese magistrate, kneeling on a chain, with no other clothing but a few filthy rags, a chain round his neck, his hands tied behind him, and the soldiers from time to time tugging at his ears and hair to make him look up at his judge. This was the hour he had thought of; the hour he had dimly foreseen, when in his youth he had prayed to St. Francis Xavier to obtain for him the grace of being a missionary; the hour he had shrinkingly longed for in those moments of quiet prayer in the

early mornings in the Rue de Sèvres before Paris was awake; the hour that had beckoned to him on the lonely ocean. It had come at last!

The grace of martyrdom is, in itself, the greatest of graces. But this is true rather because the heart is willing than because the flesh is racked. Jesus died amid sufferings more intense than those of the martyrs. But it was because they intensified the love and the sacrifice of His Sacred Heart, and not by any virtue of mere pain that His sufferings saved the world, and formed the deep ocean of all merit, from whose abundance man obtains merit. Martyrdom is first an act of the will. The martyr has generally been prepared for his holocaust by a long course of fervent acceptance. The aspirations of childhood, the discipline of youth, the mature prayer of manhood, the practice of humility, the love of self-denial, above all, personal devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—these have been the elements of his apprenticeship. When the moment comes, it finds him already a martyr in heart. The sudden appearance of the Cross is no sickening disappointment, no hideous change, no despairing crisis. To him the presence of the judge and of the executioner is the natural end of his path. It is where his steps have been leading him. The flesh may shrink. Our martyr used to read to his neophytes in the Hou-peh mountains the *Acts of the Early Martyrs*. He also read in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* the story of the frightful tortures of certain missionaries in Cochin-China. It was observed that this made a deep impression on

him, and that he shuddered, as if he could imagine what it would be to suffer thus. "Those refinements of barbarity," he said, "made nature tremble, but when the moment came, God was sure to give the grace to bear them!"

The time was come when the truth of those words would have to be proved. The Cross was before him; the Cross, not in the form in which it comes to most of us; not in the shape of mere trouble, annoyance, or bearable pain, but in all its genuine and real character, with all its violence, its physical torture and its blood.

There is a letter of the Blessed Martyr's, a letter stained with his own blood, written from his last prison. In that letter he mentions that he was questioned before judges and magistrates no less than twenty-six times in five months. These interrogatories meant torture, and torture so ingenious, so fiendish, so relentless, that nothing we read of in the acts of the early martyrs can surpass it. The confessor was asked why he came, or was commanded to name all his fellow Christians, or to trample on the crucifix. And then came the torture. It is well to recall these things, though our flesh may shrink. I could not indeed go through one-fourth part of what he endured; it would be too dreadful. But let us remember that in every one of these questionings there were such horrors as the beating of his face, the being hung up for hours by the hands, the being tied and jerked for hours till the bones were dislocated, the being compelled to kneel for four hours at a time on iron chains, and flagellation often repeated by one of the most

barbarous instruments of punishment that fiendish ingenuity has ever invented. Then, when it was over for a time, there was the fetid prison, the long hours of burning pain, the company of the worst of men. Add to this, again, the moral torture—when he saw his dear Christians apostatise, when he had to listen to calumnies, blasphemies, and filth. I have gone through it; it is all written down now; I do not invent or imagine. It ought, indeed, to stir our hearts, to shame our tepidity, to rebuke our self-indulgence, to think that a man whom we might ourselves have known, has stood firm through such a trial of his constancy. Here indeed was the Cross, and the power of the Cross.

And it was fitting that it should be that beloved Cross of his Master itself that was to be the very test and touchstone of his faith and love. The usual demand that was addressed to him at the interrogatories was to trample on the Crucifix. He would reply, "To my death will I never deny my Faith or dishonour the Cross". They would bring in the Crucifix, these cold, clever, relentless heathens, and put it before him: "If you will tread under foot the God Whom you adore, you shall go free". Then the eyes of the heroic confessor would fill with tears, and he would say with the deepest feeling, "How could I? How could I? Dishonour my God, my Saviour, my Creator!" And stooping with great difficulty, for his body was all bruised, he would take hold of the sacred image, press it to his heart and to his lips, kissing it in the tenderest way, and watering it with his tears.

And once one of the gaolers took it from him and spat upon it. Then the holy priest cried out loud with pain and horror, "Anything but that! Anything but that!" And when they thereupon seized him and beat him unmercifully, the blows were sweet in comparison with what he suffered when his Saviour was insulted. One mandarin, in pity to him, had a cross traced upon the floor, and then made them drag him over it. But he kept crying out, "It is not I, it is not I! It is you who profane the holy sign, not I!"

Some of you have seen the striking representation of his martyrdom. His arms were tied over a cross; his legs were bent and his feet tied behind the upright of the cross, so that he seems to be fastened up in a kneeling attitude. Thus he was strangled. Then, at the very time of his martyrdom, as we are told on the authority of eye-witnesses, a great luminous cross appeared in the heavens; it was seen at the same moment by numbers of Christians and Pagans, in many different places. It was a faint shadow of that triumph which the Cross had won in the death of Jean Gabriel Perboyre.

One more soul had ascended to the feet of Jesus Christ in the power of the Cross. But the mystery of the Cross, if it is the secret of the triumph of a soul, is also the secret of the salvation of the world. Look at the multitude of the heathen, in darkness yet—in the shades of death; fighting, poor ignorant beings, against the hand that would heal them, raging against the charitable bands that would save them. When God will gather them in we know not. It sometimes

takes much blood, much suffering, to win a nation. There have been nations, like Ireland, converted without blood-shedding. But the martyrdom had been gone through before; in the Roman amphitheatres, in the mines and quarries of the Crimea, had been shed the blood and uttered the prayers which won success for the preaching of St. Patrick. So will the blood which has fallen on the soil of China plead for mercy for her. Do not think that a martyr perishes and is forgotten. No! Not a drop of his blood! not a hair of his head! not a grain of his dust! It is all counted, and it is part of the royal ransom, made royal and precious by the Blood of Jesus, which is to be the price of countless graces yet to come. May God hasten the day! And for us, my brethren, this martyrdom is light, and encouragement, and strength. Who is worth serving but only Jesus! Surely this career makes us feel the secret of God's mystery! Neither money, nor genius, nor strength can move the universe, but only the Cross. Neither kings, nor parliaments, nor demonstrations—but only the Cross. Neither words, nor the press, nor art, nor science—but only the Cross. Live for the Cross!

And work and pray for the missionaries. There are many priests, many religious orders, engaged in preaching the Gospel to the heathen. In China itself there are now some twenty-four vicariates. Of all the bodies of men who have laboured and laid down their lives for China, there are none who have been braver or more persistent than the children of St. Vincent of Paul, to whom Blessed John Gabriel belonged, and in

one of whose churches we are celebrating his beatification. Do you think that this glorious career has not given *them* new inspirations and renewed spirit of sacrifice? It is indeed a splendid grace that one of themselves—one who but lately knelt on the benches of their novitiate and trod the corridors of their house in Paris—one who lived like they live, and prepared himself by the prayer, and regularity, and labour, and modesty which they practise—should have been placed among God's blessed Martyrs! May his spirit animate them, and his prayers sustain them. And may those venerated Sisters of Charity, St. Vincent's other army of apostles in a different sense, themselves be filled with all the joy of this day. He used to send word home for the prayers of the Sisters. Ah! how many prayers, and how fervent prayers, and how much labour, and how many acts of self-denial, were offered for him; and who can say how much of the victory of those long months of torture was owing to the prayers of the Sisters of Charity!

May God be praised for the triumph of the Cross in this day's solemnity. Let us join in the Mass and the *Te Deum*; let us invoke the prayers of the Blessed Martyr; and let us resolve, with God's help, both to take up the Cross of Jesus Christ and to do our best, by prayer and sacrifice, that that Cross may be carried to the uttermost bounds of the earth.

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